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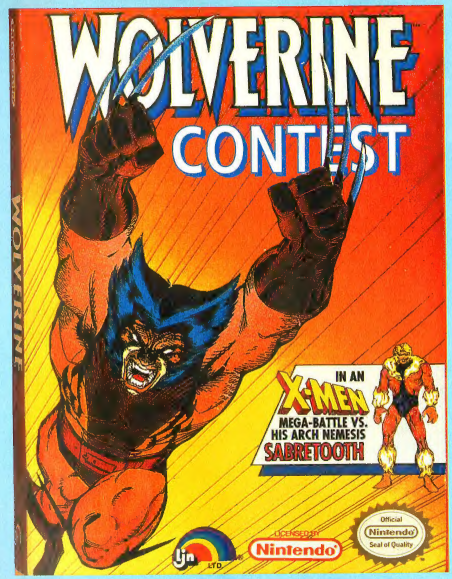

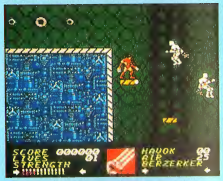

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This contest is open to all except employees (and freelancers) of Acclaim Entertainment, LJN, Nintendo, Marvel Entertainment Group and the Starlog Group and their affiliates, subsidiaries, suppliers and advertising agencies. No purchase necessary. Void where prohibited by law.

All entries must be received in the COMICS SCENE offices no later than January 15, 1992. A random postcard drawing will be conducted, with prizes sent out when they become available. Please note: No responsibility is assumed for any lost, misdirected or late entries and any lost, misdirected or damaged-in-mail prizes.

Through the courtesy of LJN and Acclaim Entertainment, the prizes are 24 of Acclaim's *Wolverine* for the Nintendo Entertainment System.

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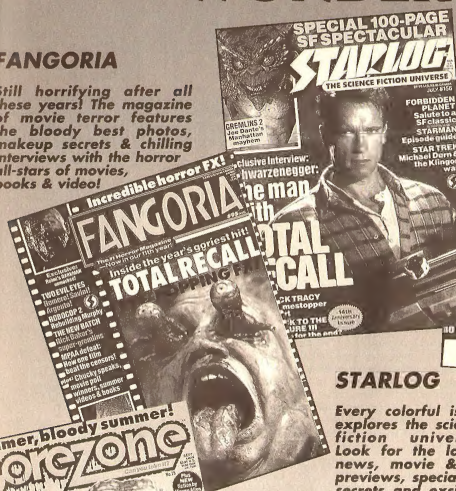

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WORD BALLOONS

Infinity Coverage

We thought a lot about it. We talked about it. We discussed it. But ultimately, we simply didn't do it. We didn't put *Beauty & the Beast* on the cover.

Here's why: The publisher didn't think it would sell.

Now, let me explain all this, because you're probably as confused as I am. Yes, Disney's *Beauty & the Beast is* on the cover, plastered in that turf known as the left corner box. This is, curiously, the most important part of the cover. Yes, really. Most magazines—*Time, Newsweek, TV Guide* and a few others excepted—don't always get "full cover display" on newsstands and supermarket racks. Instead, the magazines are lumped together, one beside the other, overlapping so that only an inch or less of each different title is visible. And what do you see? Either the very top of the cover (including the logo) or a small area from the magazine's spine to the right.

If this is how magazines (or comics) are arranged at your local shopping places, you know what I mean. This kind of display makes it difficult for an individual title to attract a buyer's attention. Magazines and comics try to overcome this obstacle by positioning something that will grab your attention in both that top corner left area and the space above the logo. For example, Marvel comics have been identified for years by those heroic figures or head shots in the corners—and when you can't see the rest of the comic in the spinner rack, that's what catches your eye. Decades ago, DC used a black & white checkered design at the top of their covers, establishing a sort of pop art brand identity. You didn't even need to see a logo. The checkerboard told you that it was a DC comic.

I think you now realize why those cover areas—which we refer to as real estate—are important. In many cases, that's *all* you'll see when you search the racks for a new issue (because you buy every issue of that title) or an issue you like (because you only buy a specific title when it looks good or includes something you want to read) or a new title (because you've never before bought an issue of this magazine or comic, but you've finally become intrigued enough to sample it, to make that impulse buy). That's why there has to be something strong in that corner cover.

By the way, all sorts of other arcane cover knowledge has accumulated over the years. Just a few comics insights: If you put hot characters (i.e. Ghost Rider, Lobo, etc.) on the covers of new or poor-selling titles, sales will, of course, go up, sometimes dramatically. According to Roy Thomas, sales of his individual issues of *Conan* once varied depending on whether skeletons were included on the cover. Conclusion: Skeletons sell. And most importantly, "infinity covers"—those covers of, for example, readers holding a copy of COMICS SCENE on which there is a (smaller) cover of the same readers holding a COMICS SCENE with the same (even smaller) cover, ad infinitum—sell very well indeed.

But we were pondering *Beauty & the Beast.* There are two other truisms at work right here: 1) *All* magazines published don't sell overwhelmingly well in December and January, due to the time and financial demands of the holidays on all readers. And 2) COMICS SCENE covers featuring animation—whether of good movies (*The Little Mermaid, The Secret of Nimh*) or disappointments (*Fire & Ice, Jetsons: The Movie*) or even TV (*Tiny Toon Adventures, The Simpsons*)—as the cover's main image, not that corner box, have *not* sold as well as covers featuring superheroes.

Furthermore, in a strange double standard, although it's the corner box area that's most important, editorially, among ourselves we say things like, "Hand me a copy of that *Addams Family* issue," not "the one with Doc Savage in the corner," #23. It's the main image that gets the public recognition, and it's the main image to which we perversely attribute all or most of that issue's sales success.

Yes, editors and publishers have seen Disney's *Beauty & the Beast.* And I hope you have, too. If not, go out and see it now. Yes, we think *Beauty & the Beast* is a masterwork, an absolutely terrific film. Yet still, as I've outlined, we *didn't* put it on the (main) cover because "animation doesn't sell so well, and this is a lackluster sales time to begin with."

Nope, we didn't put it on the cover, but we did put it on that more important top corner real estate. Understand? *If* you do, if you can truly follow the logical absurdities of this debate, let me tell you *one* very important thing.

You have a *great* future in publishing.

—David McDonnell/Editor

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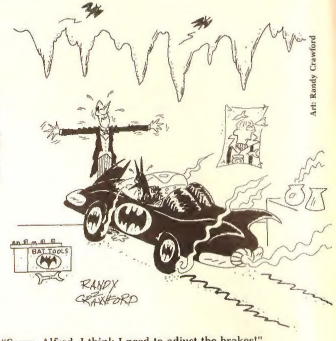
...I was unsettled by the article you recently ran on ASIFA-Hollywood's campaign to restore the nitrate cartoons of the '20s and '30s at UCLA before time runs out.

It is a supreme and grievous irony that the first cartoon they picked to restore was "Grampy's Indoor Outing." This cartoon is owned by NTA. If not as a negative, as a first-run positive. The fact remains: This cartoon is in *no* danger of vanishing, even if the negative *crumbles*! By contrast, Felix the Cat starred in over 200 cartoons in the 1920s. Only about 30 of them now are in any type of circulation. My guess is that another 50 are out there in one or two copies, and the others are still missing. What about *those*? There's a "high-visibility star" who is in real danger. His films are 60% gone, and his current owners care only about the inane 1960s TV series, a care which has mired Felix in mediocrity for 25 years. There are undoubtedly Felixes in the UCLA collection which exist nowhere else. ASIFA should spend time and money to restore *those*.

My general opinion, though, is that ASIFA will get their act together and restore all of the scarcest material...although their initial preferences may actually doom some beautiful cartoons. However, there's something that they cannot save: Cartoons which exist, but are despised and suppressed by their owners.



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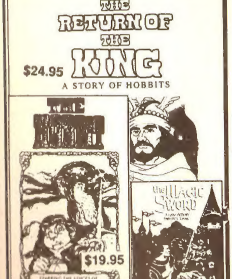

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Walt Disney Animation is ashamed that it ever made black-and-white cartoons; 75% of Mickey Mouse's cartoons lacked color. For this, they have been suppressed, aside from about 20 which have been run over and over on the Disney Channel, often shamefully cut. These cartoons, the most joyous, enthusiastic and interesting cartoons of the early 1930s, have finally lost out in popularity to their contemporary competitors, entirely because the early 1930s work of Warner Bros. and Fleischer *are* widely available now...at least most of them. It is *impossible* for a serious fan to build a collection of early Disney cartoons, and thus there's nothing to *do* but turn to Bosko and Betty Boop.

I was witness as the original *Mickey Mouse Club* was banished from the Disney Channel and replaced by a new version—more specifically, an unabashed attempt to one-up Nickelodeon's *You Can't Do That On Television*, which abandoned classic cartoons completely, color or black-and-white. Sadly, the *Mickey Mouse Club* was the only way collectors were able to see the other 75% of Mickey's films. The Disney Channel, which now spends an hour every day showing us Hanna-Barbera's *Jump, Rattle and Roll* and *Care Bears*, couldn't care less. They seem to have completely forgotten the meaning of quality.

Many of the early Mickey cartoons have been colorized by computer methods, a way that leaves the original art intact. Shockingly, Disney refuses to release them complete on TV or video, yet feels fit to show *excerpts* of them on "tributes" to their studio—and worse—as accompaniment to rock music. The episodes made from 1928-1930 are on the primitive side, sure. But it's hard to believe that in some kind of distribution, they could not do worse than Warners' Bosko series, which Nickelodeon runs successfully.

ASIFA is being praised for saving rare cartoons. I think it's the worst hypocrisy of all that the most famous cartoon character in the world, Mickey Mouse, is being starved by the hand that fed him and cannot be helped out by *anyone*.

David Gerstein
620 E. Valerio Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93103

Art: Kevin Brockschmidt

...Well, I see NBC has not included *Alvin & The Chipmunks* in its 1991-2 season, tho' *Turn-On*-level trash like *Chip & Pepper is* included. I'm not surprised, though. Last season, they had to go fix something that wasn't broken: Instead of those chipmunks doing true-to-life stories, they just sat around watching watered-down parodies of hit (schlock) movies. After three such outings, I boycotted the rest of the season. At no time did NBC wake up and smell the coffee!

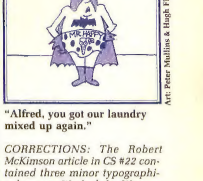
I really enjoy watching *Tiny Toons* though continuity and consistency is vestigial at best. As they have not begun a second season this September (it looks like another round of repeats), and as I have the better ones on tape, I'll be viewing those. They did break a lot of taboos; such as toilets.

I haven't read DC's "comics" since the *Crisis* brouhaha, which was a mess both continuity- and consistency-wise. Writers couldn't decide whether the last five parallel earths merged along their entire time-lines or in 1986. DC has been writing for skinheads and punks lately and their subject matter clearly shows this.

I'm sorry for the *Tintin* adaptations for TV (CS #23); this strip has been beautifully drawn and well-written by the late Hergé, but I have *all* the stories and thus any overly-simplified and toned-down TV rendition would only get negatively compared by me, a purist, to the original. Also, they haven't helped by not choosing to adapt *Explorers on the Moon*, my favorite.

I no longer read Marvel as their stories are no longer comprehensible. Their art is cluttered and incoherent. What prompted me to leave three years ago, was all the killing, the changes and the lack of any pacing; the worst of all was *Alpha Flight*, which often contradicted something established two issues earlier! The X-Men were getting truly schlocky and turning into gibberish.

Paul R. Wilson
Bergenfield, NJ



Art: Peter Mollins & Hugh Fleming

"Alfred, you got our laundry mixed up again."

CORRECTIONS: The Robert McKimson article in CS #22 contained three minor typographical errors. It's Jack L. *Warner, not Jack* O. *Warner. The cartoon is "Arabian Nightmare," not "Arabian Nightmares." And it's the USC Archives of the Performing Arts, not the USA.*

BRUCE, IF YOU DON'T CALL A DOCTOR ABOUT THAT WEIRD SWELLING, I'LL CALL ONE FOR YOU!
BATMAN © DC COMICS
IT LOOKS LIKE THE BATMAN WON'T BE WEARING HIS COSTUME UNDER HIS SHIRT.
Art: Mike Fisher

Of Titans & Terminators

Marv Wolfman deals out surprise fates & deadly futures.

Art: Kerry Gammill/Al Vey

Art: Tom Grummett/Al Vey

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

Titans, a Terminator and a Tomb have been occupying veteran writer Marv Wolfman's time these days, but he's doing exactly what he enjoys.

Variety and change is what keeps him interested after all these years, he explains. *Tomb of Dracula* (CS #22) is the revival of a title he worked on in the '70s, *Deathstroke the Terminator* has just earned its own series (see sidebar, page 12) and *The New Titans* is undergoing a major shake-up.

Recent events have seen the Titans membership undergo a radical change, with plenty of others promised. New members are joining, old members are dying, and there will even be another *Teen Titans* title in mid-1992.

"One of the problems the Titans have had for many years was playing to the status quo," says Wolfman. "We weren't doing anything. I was bored with it, and so were the readers—we just weren't pushing."

New editor Jonathan Peterson was instrumental in pushing for changes. When Peterson took over the book, Wolfman says artist Tom Grummett, inker Al Vey and outgoing editor Mike Carlin got together for three days to come up with the current storyline that has them all excited again.

"I was really thrilled," says Wolfman. "Occasionally, I like my characters so much that I never want them to go through any major problems, and of course, that's what makes the stories interesting. Jonathan kept at us, and we kept coming up with new characters and a new direction. We couldn't believe how well the new stuff tied in to everything we had been doing for 11 years on *Titans*.

"The status quo was becoming stale, not the characters. We were following the same type of stories that we had been doing. Mike Carlin and I had been talking about changes, too, but we never got to work on it to the degree we wanted. Jonathan was Mike's assistant, so he knew of all this and was gung-ho to make the changes.

"We all sat down and came up with the ideas together. We were able to bring in things from the first issue and have them tie in *precisely* with what we wanted to do, so nothing came out of left field. Everything ac-

Selected Art Colors: Tom McCraw

Art: Tom Grummett/Al Vey

Except for Phantasm (left) and Pantha (center), there won't be a solid Titans membership for some time, says writer Marv Wolfman.

Troia will leave *The New Titans* to become a supporting character in the new Teen Titans series.

tually functions within things that have happened before, yet it's actually all brand-new. That's what makes it really exciting for us. We could have come up with anything, but this actually ties into continuity, and we very clearly set it up years ago!"

One of the best examples is Jericho, who betrayed his fellow Titans when he became the leader of the Wildebeest Society. "The stuff with Jericho very specifically ties into the first five issues of the second version of the *Titans*, when he tries to cure Raven after she has been taken over by Trigon. Jericho tried to enter her and was horribly repelled. The ending of that particular story made the whole changeover into what we currently have. Also, the very first *real* storyline in *Titans* 11 years ago was a Raven storyline—why Raven assembled the whole team. So in a way, it goes right back to their origins."

Although Wolfman says he obviously didn't plan the current events a decade ago, he was surprised at how many plot seeds were planted.

"We were able to pick up on threads we had left," he says. "When a writer is in this mode with continuity stories, he leaves things behind specifically unsettled, even if he doesn't know it. I've had too many situations in the past where I've been able to tap into things and go, 'Why did I leave this here?' and it was obviously an unconscious thing to be picked up on later.

"This stuff was clearly set up. Jericho's personality had drastically changed over the last few years anyway. Granted, that wasn't tied in with what we were doing, but it certainly leaves it open to be interpreted as a retro-continuity: you could explain some of it because of what we're doing now. I don't think I've ever been in a series of meetings where so much was accomplished that it shocked us. We knew where we wanted to go, we knew we wanted to shake things up."

Readers may be shocked as well, though Wolfman says that wasn't their primary goal.

"The shocks are only to let the readers know that things are changing. We weren't specifically sitting down and saying, 'This issue we're going to shock everybody.' With a few points, we did, of course—the revelation of Jericho, the introduction of new characters, the deaths of a few characters. Those were designed to shock, but also to let people know this

(continued on page 14, after sidebar)

Art: Kerry Gammill/Al Milgrom/Ed Hannigan

New Teen Titans burst from the pages of *The New Titans* and into their own series in 1992.

Deathstrokes

Art: Mike Zeck

***Deathstroke, the Terminator* visits Gotham City. How long will he stay? That's up to the Batman—and Marv Wolfman.**

Although *Deathstroke, the Terminator* has been around for over a decade, he's now the newest, hottest action hero in comics. With his non-Comics Code-approved solo series barely half-a-year old, the Terminator faces an active future, beginning with a four-parter co-starring the Batman.

"Terminator is wanted by the CIA in the current storyline," says co-creator Marv Wolfman. "Jericho [of *The New Titans*] has been killed by Terminator, his own father, in a scene that's just gorgeous, the way Tom Grummett drew it. So, issue #5 saw the Terminator try to make amends with Addie, his ex-wife, who never wants to see him again. He leaves Wintergreen, the calming influence on him, behind, and wants nothing to do with anybody."

A criminal gang in Gotham City wants him to kill a turncoat/informer, but "Terminator turns them down. Then, the Mob wants to wipe him out, so he does go after the informer. A Gotham policeman is killed," says Wolfman. "Now, Terminator is wanted by the Gotham police, too, and they call in the Batman."

The next year will see Slade Wilson (the title character) involved in a variety of storylines.

"We're gonna keep moving in different ways. In the next few months, Terminator will be hunted by virtually everybody in the DC Universe," Wolfman says. "He's gonna be caught and imprisoned. We don't have to worry about secret identities, because he doesn't have one. He wears a mask, but that's a professional thing. People do know who he is and how to get in touch with him.

"He's put behind bars, and unlike any supposed hero, nobody in prison dislikes him. He's a killer—he doesn't put away criminals. At the same time, he's losing all of his extra abilities because of what happens in the Batman storyline."

When Terminator first appeared in *New Teen Titans* #2, he was a violent gun-toting mercenary, unafraid to kill. And when DC finally gave him his own title, Wolfman says the character wasn't softened up to make him more appealing or accessible.

"In fact, I probably *hardened* him!" the writer says. "When you're working with other people, you work at their level. Since he had to accomplish the same goals—he wanted to

"I think Slade [Wilson] can be likable," notes the writer. "Terminator isn't."

According to Wolfman, "Terminator will be hunted by virtually everybody in the DC Universe."

find his son—he had to work with the Titans. He needed their abilities. On his own, he *doesn't* have to temper himself."

Terminator isn't your typical comic-book hero, says Wolfman—in fact, he's not exactly a hero at all.

"I have always viewed him as pretty much what he is—a mercenary. He's not a superhero. He's the protagonist of our book and has a strict moral code, which regular people would probably disagree with completely. If he's attacked, he kills. He's a mercenary, and he takes on jobs as a soldier of fortune. I guess that's legal, unless you get caught by the other side! That's the way he has made his money."

He achieved popularity with his first appearance. Nevertheless, it has taken several years for *Deathstroke* the series to begin.

"It's strange, because when I created the character with George [Perez] back in *Titans* #2, we knew we had something. Dick Giordano thought the character should have stood on his own; that's how strong he was. We had done several stories that indicated this was a powerful character and could probably get his own book. This eventually became [*Titans* editor] Jonathan Peterson's idea. We did the pilot in *Titans* #70, which was a way of reminding people who the Terminator was, since he hadn't appeared in years. Reaction was so good that we made a regular series out of it."

Although some have drawn comparisons between Terminator and Marvel's Punisher, the writer says there are few similarities.

"We got this an awful lot before the book came out," he observes. "Obviously, Punisher was in the '70s, and Terminator was created in 1980, but Terminator, in my mind, is very clearly a mercenary. Punisher is a mob-hunter. They have *completely* different reasons for existing, and it's essentially the difference between a soldier and a policeman. Granted, they're freelancers, but one goes after the mob, and the other takes on jobs for hire.

"From what I've read of *The Punisher*, *Vigilante*, which I did, was much closer, but when we did *Vigilante*, there was no *Punisher* comic book. The other difference is that the stories are not personal stories in *The Punisher*. All of the stories in *Deathstroke* are personal. They're about him, they're about the people he cares about; there's a love interest. To me, Slade Wilson is a vitally interesting character. He's more interesting than

Art: Steve Erwin/Willie Blyberg

[his alter ego] Deathstroke, who's more of a hired gun. Slade Wilson's a real person. The character in *The Punisher* exists solely to be the Punisher—his sole purpose is to wipe out bad guys."

One problem Wolfman continually faces is writing a lead character who isn't really a nice guy.

"I think Slade can be likable. Terminator isn't," he says. "Slade is certainly a social animal—that's another difference between him and the Punisher—I can't even remember the Punisher's real name [Frank Castle], even though I wrote one or two back in *Spider-Man*, when he still used mercy bullets. Slade can be a very social and sexual character. He's a person who has needs, desires and everything. On the other hand, Terminator is a mercenary. He can be a very likable person in a job that most of us would find repulsive."

Wolfman isn't sure why Terminator is so popular, but he says they knew the character was a success from the beginning.

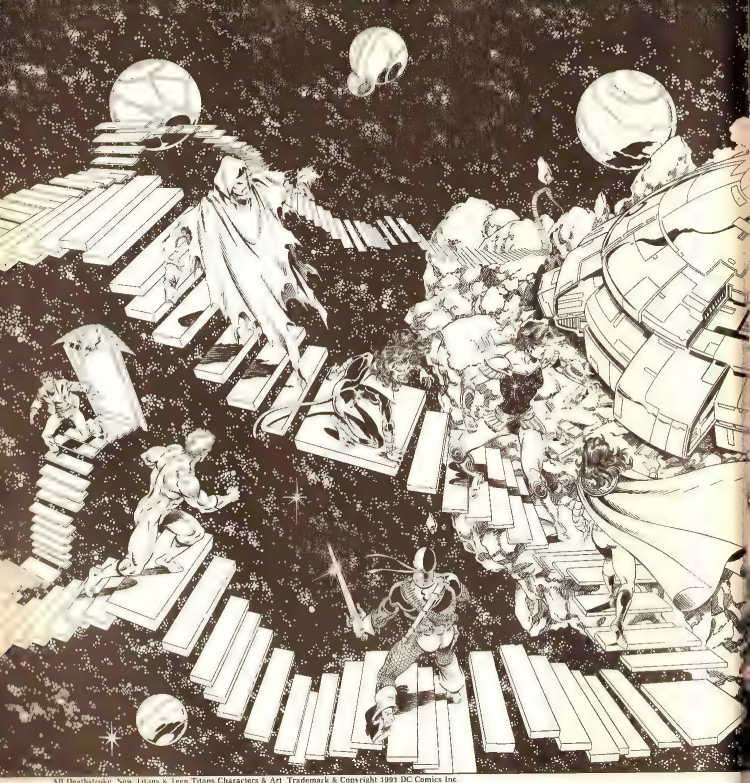
"Frankly, when we started him in 1980, we knew we had something with him. Readers have always liked the character. He has always gotten the best mail of the Titans. I used him very sparingly because I saw he was so strong that I didn't want to overuse him as a supporting character," Wolfman explains.

"I saw him as too strong for the book; he would eclipse everybody else—and he has done just that! To brag a little bit, I think it was one of those times that we came up with a nearly perfect creation, and you can't plan those. This character just sang the moment he was created, and we all knew it.

"*Deathstroke, the Terminator* is a book that I really enjoy doing," Wolfman says. "I did *Jon Sable* for a while, simply because I love writing international stories. The blend I currently have writing *Titans* and *Terminator* is a phenomenal one, because I get to write several genres that I enjoy doing.

"I love doing the type of realistic, gritty stuff that *Terminator* affords," enthuses Marv Wolfman. "And I like writing the fantasy stuff with the *Titans*, too. It's not like I'm writing the same book, and that's important."

—Kim Howard Johnson



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is important. "But we've seen hype—we can't tell the reader that it's good, that they're going to be surprised—they've *got* to *be* surprised."

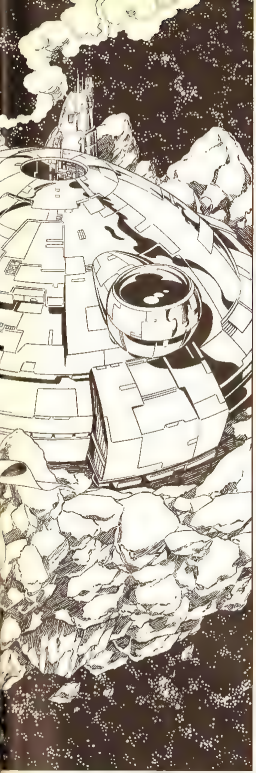
Death won't be taking a holiday from the *Titans*. There'll be further fatalities in the current three-part storyline, says Wolfman, though he declines to be specific.

"It's not to shake things up," he says, "outside of Golden Eagle's death. He was a useless character in many ways—nobody was using him, and he was replicated elsewhere. It tells the reader that nothing is sacred. That first death may have been tenuous, but the future ones aren't—this is the direction it had to go once we set the story in motion."

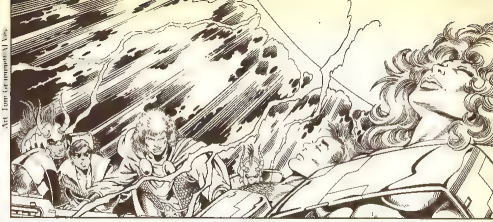
Along with the deaths, Wolfman has introduced new team members Phantasm and Pantha in the last storyline. "When the dust has settled, there will be a slightly different group of Titans. I don't want to pinpoint the competition, but unlike other books, those characters are *not* going to come back, with the status quo maintained and the exact same group they began with. Some of these characters are gone for good because they're dead! We've been very careful in *The New Titans*—when we say they're dead, they're dead!

"Now, that brings up Terra!" laughs Wolfman. The one-time traitorous Titan was killed years ago, but has turned up alive in the current storyline—or has she?

"All I can say is that this is somebody named Terra who has similar powers, though not identical. She looks the same, and answers to that name, but it's very clearly said in the



Art: Tom Grummett/Al Vey



Art: Tom Grummett/Al Vey

More deaths are in store for the Titans, confesses Wolfman. "This is the direction it had to go once we set the story in motion."

current set-up," says Wolfman. "Not all of the characters are going to be there. Cyborg is currently brain-dead. How long that will last hasn't been worked out. There's going to be a two-part Cyborg story appearing in *DC Showcase* at some point that puts the final kibosh on his easily getting back his brains. We don't have that resolution timed out—it's a long-range story, but right now, he's little more than a robot. Troia will be out of the group. Raven and a couple of the others are pretty much out. The only ones we know for sure are Nightwing, Starfire, Changeling, Phantasm and Pantha—but I may be wrong at this moment. Those are the characters who are technically supposed to stay.

"[Readers'] first reaction was, 'How dare you do this? How dare you get rid of the characters that we've grown to love for 11 years?' Slowly, everybody saw that this was a major change, and they started to become interested in the book. Now, the reader reaction is 98 percent positive, incredibly so. People don't know where we're going, and they want to read it. We've done exactly what we wanted to do, and now we have to maintain that by continually shaking up the status quo."

Wolfman is enthusiastic about his *Titans* collaborators. "It's a different type of relationship than I had with George Perez, when we sat down and created the thing," he says. "But right now, we're trying to re-create it. George and I lived within walking distance of each other, so we used to get together for lunch and talk things out. The current relationship isn't as close on a personal basis, because Tom [Grummett, artist] lives in Canada, and Al [Vey, inker] lives in Milwaukee, so we only get to see each other a couple of times a year. Al is totally crazy—I love him. He'll come up with the wildest concepts.

"Tom is a little bit quieter than Al: he'll come in with these little things that sound real good—he's the type of person who's fairly quiet, and then will come in with exactly the right thing. Jonathan [Peterson] has been phenomenal. I've never worked with an editor who has been more involved and enthusiastic. He has maintained that love for the stuff that many other editors get jaded by and lose interest. I'm having a ball working with Jonathan."

Meanwhile, a spin-off *Titans* title which fans got a preview in the summer 1991 annual, is also in the works. The book will be called either *The Teen Titans* or *Team Titans*, and Wolfman says the *Titans/Armageddon 2001 Annual* explains what the new team from the future is all about.

"They're one of *several hundred* groups in the future, all of whom have last *Titans Annual* that this is *not* the same Terra. The explanations for all that are coming at some point—I've got them roughly worked out. It is not Tara Markov. [the Terra] who was killed. What she is and why she answers to the name Terra, how she got her powers and why she looks the same is all part of the story. *Titans* fans may get angry at things, but we've never lied to them."

"*The New Titans* exists as an adventure book, as a fun character book, as a melodrama," says the writer.

A STAGGERINGLY SHORT ONE-SIDED FIGHT LATER...
THANKS, LADIES -- BUT YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO TAKE OUT ALL OF THEM YOURSELVES.
NO SWEAT.
PUMPKIN HAD SOME TERRAGEN TO WORK OFF AND I'M ACTUAL... BEGINNING TO ENJOY BALKING YOUR BUTTS.
PANTHA!
TERRAGEN'S A PLAN, TO SPLIT OFF OBVIOUSLY HAD ITS BENEFITS.
ANY SIGN OF GUS, PIX ENJOY?

Art: Tom Grummett/Al Vey

Art: Tom Grummett, Al Vey

The key to the Titans' future success, reveals Wolfman, is that readers have "*got* to be surprised."

been sent back to the present for one purpose—to kill Troia," he says. "And to prevent her son, the villain in the annual, from being born. Unfortunately, he's back in the past, too, as revealed in issue #80. They've all come into the past, including this godlike character, because he's the son of a Titan, but unlike Troia, he was not trained and the powers drove him crazy, as revealed in issues #50-#54, the origin of Wonder Girl."

In it, one of the Titan gods' "seeds" (beings given godlike powers but without memory of those powers' origin, then returned to their home planets) somehow maintains the forbidden memory and goes totally crazy. "The memories of all the others were removed," says Wolfman. "This is what I mean by picking a thread from the past and using it in the present. Donna was converted into a god by these Titan gods, and very clearly established that if they had maintained their memories, they would go crazy. Now, she's having a baby. All the power of the gods is inside her—she has been trained to use the power well, but the baby has no such training. The power of the gods enters the baby, which instantly ages itself and is totally mad. Now, it's back in the past. His goal is to preserve Troia, his mother, until she actually gives birth, and *then* kill her.

The Teen Titans are assigned to destroy her before she can give birth, and our Titans, in a sense, have to take the side of the mad god who's going to destroy their entire planet later, because they must preserve her. That's our next storyline, which eventually leads to the Teen Titans' own book next May or June."

Although the new title will deal with one team, Wolfman says there are potentially hundreds of groups that could appear in the book.

"As revealed in the annual, there are many groups in the future. This mysterious person from our time period brought together hundreds of these people and kept them all separated. They cannot know who they are, so in case they're captured they can give no information whatsoever. They're all different teams, they all have different orders and they're all designed for various things to create a brand-new future for themselves. So, we have a major storyline with hundreds of new characters added as we need them. Some of them we may never see—we get a hint of it in *Titans* #80."

However, the stars of the new comic will still be the team introduced in the annual. "The major group will be the one we've seen: Nightrider, Killowat, Redwing, Mirage, Prester John and Terra. But there are other groups, and, if we need to, we may just center on them for a storyline. We can play with the entire DC Universe, play with history, and keep things fresh by not having to worry about centering on just one set of characters."

One of the current team members—Troia—will move over to become a supporting character in the new *Teen Titans*, and won't be appearing in the regular book, says Wolfman. Although Nightwing was the new group's leader in the *Titans Annual*, he won't be anymore.

"Because that's an alternate future, and because that was Nightwing's story, he had to be that character," Wolfman says. "We have to play a little bit fast and loose, and the readers will have to work with us on it, because it is an alternate future that may or may not come about. Consequently, once it was no longer Nightwing's future, that same situation existed, minus him. However, when the characters do come into the present and Mirage sees Nightwing, she will have the same romantic feelings for him, which will provide a conflict between her and Starfire."

Wolfman isn't content with the two *Titans* books—he's planning a mini-series starring one of the most popular team members. "Nightwing could certainly carry a full series, but why try to get one out every month? His stuff is very complicated. The storyline is going to cross three generations: Batman, Nightwing and Robin."

Additionally, there may be a third *Titans* title involving a hot young talent currently working on a Marvel Comics bestseller. "They've been talking about a mini-series with Rob Liefeld," Wolfman says, "but I don't know what the final thing is."

Games, the long-anticipated *Titans* graphic novel, will still happen. Wolfman promises it will be worth the long wait.

"It's about 120 pages, and George Perez has drawn 80 pages of it," he says. "When he finishes it, I will dialogue it, and I sure hope it's soon! It's going to be a flashback now; after George is done, he's going back to add a beginning and ending section with the new characters, because it's not the same group now. It'll be the only time that George has done the new characters, and it'll also be the last time we'll see the old ones. It's a great story. I can't wait—the first 80 pages are gorgeous! It's some of the best work George has ever done."

With all of his *Titans* projects, the runaway success of *Deathstroke, the Terminator* and the various mini-series and one-shots, Marv Wolfman does feel he's overworked, "But I always feel that way," he laughs.

His fans will be happy to hear that his workload won't cause him to drop any titles.

"I may not pick up other stuff, or do all of the connected series," he says. "I'm not writing the *Cyborg* two-parter, though I did sit down with Len Wein and work out the story's parameters. I see no need to drop anything. I'm doing exactly what I enjoy," smiles Marv Wolfman. "When I have my cerebral hemorrhage, *then* I'll think about it."

RADIO CITY MUTANT HAUL

It's a family affair when Mark Bodé resurrects Vaughn Bodé's "Cobalt 60."

By ANYA MARTIN

Across a bleak wasteland plagued by radiation, one lone white-hooded figure stands for the mutants left in the genetic purges of the apocalyptic Radio People. In a savage realm where chemistry symbolizes mental stability, he is named for an unstable isotope, Cobalt 60.

Later to become legendary as one of the founding fathers of underground comix, Vaughn Bodé was 17 when he drew the first sketch of the character in 1958, just two years after his first pencil sales of early [illegible] to Cheech Wizard. But, while he went on to illustrate many Cheech stories, the post-nuclear holocaust world of mutant [illegible] radio-controlled dinosaurs and Cobalt 60—a mutley *Pogo* meets J.R.R. Tolkien meets *Mad Max*—was to stay mostly dormant for many years. Bodé eventually published two *Cobalt 60* [illegible] a 16-pager for the Wally Wood-founded fanzine, *Witzend* in 1969, and a six-pager for *Junkwaffel* in the early '70s. He sketched an entire cast of [illegible] characters, but his tragic death in 1975 cut short his hopes for

a longer, more detailed *Cobalt 60*.

Now, Bodé's 28-year-old son Mark is completing his father's dreams, while carving out his own reputation as a distinctively humorous comic artist. Building on his father's vivid color and fluid inking, the younger Bodé has developed his own flair for "wild style" cartooning as creator of *Miami Mice* and *Zara Tungi*, bodacious red-haired star of Penthouse's *Hot Talk*, and as a guest artist for the original *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. Indeed, working with Kevin Eastman on *TMNT* turned out to be the catalyst that has made a full, definitive *Cobalt 60* finally possible. A huge Vaughn Bodé fan, Eastman convinced Mark to relocate with wife Molly and 7-year-old daughter Zara from Berkeley to Northampton, Massachusetts, as a resident artist for Eastman's new company, Tundra Publishing.

Early next year, Tundra will release the long-awaited full *Cobalt 60* graphic novel as a four-part monthly series, pencilled and colored by Mark and written by Larry Todd. Todd, an eclectic author/artist whose works include Harlan Ellison's *The Chocolate Alphabet*, was a close friend and frequent collaborator of Vaughn Bodé, and, according to Mark, has become a mentor to the younger Bodé as well.

Opening with Vaughn Bodé's original *Witzend* story, issues #1 and #2 will reprint the first half of the Bodé/Todd collaboration, originally published as a serial in *Epic Illustrated* in the early '80s and collected by Donning/Starblaze into a slick graphic edition in 1988. Issues #3 and #4 complete the story with all-new material. And as a special bonus, all issues will feature original sketches by Vaughn and interpretations of the *Cobalt 60* universe by guest artists, friends of Mark's such as Todd, Eastman, Stephen (*Taboo*) Bissette and Rick (*Swamp Thing*) Veitch.

"My father had designed about a dozen characters for *Cobalt*, but the whole story was too morbid and too black a vision for him to live with," claims Mark Bodé, explaining why his father never developed the story further. "He found himself very depressed because he felt that the post-holocaust situation it represented was Earth's barren future. So, he left it, hoping that somebody would come along and write a longer story."

Vaughn Bodé had asked Archie Goodwin to pen a longer *Cobalt 60* story. As Mark Bodé explains, "Archie declined, saying that my father's vision was too particular to him, too much his personal vision."

As for where his father intended to go with the story, Mark Bodé adds that while Goodwin was correct in gauging the strong pull the character had on his father, Vaughn never had any clear idea of its direction. "In fact, I think he wanted to *kill* all the characters off by the tenth page and have another 24 pages of just desert," Bodé reveals. "That was his ultimate plot of *Cobalt 60*—to have more than half the book just barren plain, with the sand hissing through it and all the characters dead. Pretty bleak."

The new Bodé/Todd version of *Cobalt 60* is often black, but considerably less grim—punctuated as it is with bursts of slapstick humor and social satire. When Todd began piecing the story together in 1982, one of the first decisions he made was to omit Vaughn's second *Cobalt* story from the plotline. In it, Cobalt kills the last fertile woman left on Earth.

"That kind of ended the story right there," Bodé grins. "Larry Todd, my father's collaborator and friend, decided to take that out because it ruined a longer version of *Cobalt*."

Thus, Mark Bodé and Larry Todd's *Cobalt 60* takes up where Vaughn's *Witzend* strip left off, with Cobalt 60 sniping and gunning down a scout party of the Radio People's goonish genetic police and lopers, their trained mutant drones. He rides in on his great lumbering brontosaurial grasser and walks back into the cliffs, laser in hand, fierce eyes still leering through the dark slit of his white mask. But, Bodé and Todd also offer a motive behind Cobalt 60's bitter one-man war against the Radios; in the next scenes, set high within the spiral towers of Radio City, it is revealed that Strontium 90 (the stunted, peevish dwarf who rules tyranically over the Radio People) cleared his path to the throne by murdering Cobalt 60's parents, beloved King FE 56 and his lusty wife, AU 80. The savvy AU 80, however, arranged for her son to escape under the tutelage of "a marginal mutant governess" named Mog, a gun-toting crone who nurtured Cobalt's hatred of the Radios.

"Cobalt hates the Radios because the Radios have been exterminating the mutants in the desert," Bodé explains, dwelling on the story's internal irony. "So, Cobalt takes up the gun. As he gets older, he has these mass killings where he attacks the Radio patrols. But, he's killing his own race."

The story builds swiftly as Cobalt hooks up with birdlike scavenger and archaeologist Franklin Gothic Green, and an army of very hungry Croc soldiers led by the gruff Patton-like General History. Meanwhile, Strontium plots with his own wicked prime minister, Polonium 210, to

swindle the bobbing, legless aliens called Big Eyes out of their spacecraft so that the Radios can resettle on Venus, which "*Astounding Tales, 1936* and other Holy Books assure us is a moist world of jungle and life." The first part climaxes in a huge battle between the Big Eyes, Crocs and Radios, at the end of which Cobalt 60 is unmasked.

"At first, they think he's FE 56, the JFK of the Radio People, but then they realize that he must be FE's son, Cobalt 60, since FE was assassinated," Bodé outlines. "So, he's king, and they hail the king and parade him off in victory to Radio City. But from that point, Cobalt is basically in a straitjacket, forced to be king of a race he hates. More or less a post-holocaust Hamlet, or so I'm calling it because it's a tragedy, and yet it still has its comical side.

"Without giving away the ending, Cobalt eventually starts acting the part of king so that he can make plans to escape the castle. He makes several but unsuccessful attempts to escape, eventually *does* escape. He even bears a son, an heir to the throne. But, Cobalt hates his son, hates himself, wants to kill his son and himself, just because he knows he's carrying on the race and was forced into the entire situation."

Despite the seeming nihilism of this father-son rivalry, Bodé maintains, "Eventually, there is somewhat of a happy ending." As for Bodé's own relationship with his famous father, he characterizes it as anything but rivalous. The Bodé art style, the family legacy, was fed from an early age with love and understanding.

"I used to sit on my father's lap, while he was drawing," he recalls with a smile. "I always wanted to be a cartoonist, wanted to be like him. I wanted to be able to sit down and draw and think of fantasy lands and get into my own world. He used to tell me stories about his characters. I just wanted to stay in that realm. And he encouraged me by paying me 50 cents a page even when I was five, six years old. My father was a real drive for me."

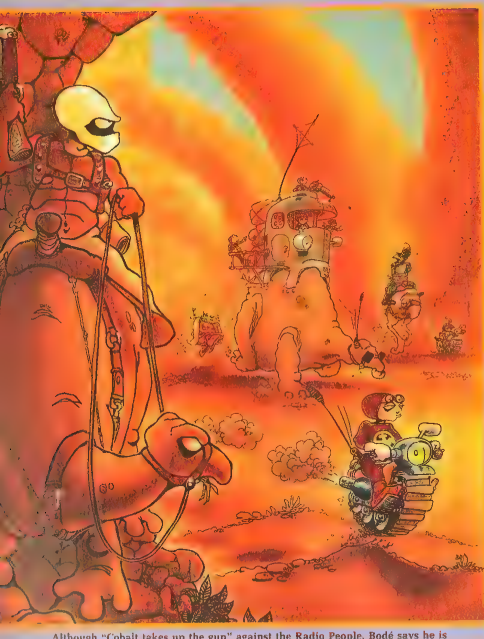
Mark Bodé's *Cobalt 60* won't head down the same "bleak" path his father, Vaughn Bodé, envisioned for the series.

Vaughn's characters easily took on a vivid reality for his young son. For example, father and son used to take long walks in the college town of Utica, New York, where Mark lived until age 12, when his father died. "We used to go walking through cemeteries and up hills," Bodé recounts. "We talked about all kinds of things—the universe, what we are, all that stuff."

In between the metaphysics, Vaughn would bring his son to one particularly memorable location. "He used to take me up the hill to Cheech Wizard's sewer hole," Bodé fondly recalls. "It was just a big metal sewer hole, as I remember it, but it was sunken into the hill and it looked like the entrance to a fort. Maybe there was a waterfall in there, because you could hear water. There was a doorknocker on it.

"We would go visit Cheech Wizard's hideout every day and talk about how Cheech never came out, of course. But, I always wondered why he didn't come out or answer our knocks. My father assured me that he was snoozing, concocting tricks or potions, or so on. That's what he used to tell me, and I believed him."

An inevitable question for Bodé has been whether he will ever draw a new Cheech story, given that he has done so many adaptations of his father's work. His first published art was at age 15 in *Heavy Metal*; he colored a goofy piece by his father, called *Zooks*, about the first lizard in orbit. In addition to *Cobalt 60*, he's adapting a children's story of Vaughn's called *Puffball*, based on a Larry Todd script. His next project, due out early next year, is a collaboration with Todd and Eastman on a *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* issue, in which the Turtles visit a planet peopled by another eclectic cast of characters planned but never fully executed by Bodé's father.



Although "Cobalt takes up the gun" against the Radio People, Bodé says he is eventually forced to rule the very race he hates.

"Many people have asked me if I will revive Cheech," Bodé muses. "Cheech is very personal. The style of writing is very personal to my father. It would be very hard to re-create Cheech Wizard, to continue the series. But, my father did set up the foundation for a Cheech Wizard story called *The Lizard of Oz*, a twisted version of the Baum books—which would probably have Cheech Wizard as the Wizard of Oz, Poppy as Dorothy, Stuffed Lizard as the Scarecrow, and a neurotic, mange-infested lion as the Cowardly Lion.

"So, that's the only possible continuation of *Cheech Wizard*. No date's set on it; it's just something I've been wanting to do because it was one of my dad's last ideas for Cheech before he died. I feel since he did do some work on it, he did show us the basic direction, that we can do some justice to it—just as long as it's known that it's a collaboration."

Indeed, the notion of collaboration is very important to Mark Bodé, giving credit where credit is due. He admits feeling strange when he first began serializing *Cobalt 60* for *Epic*, but as time passes, he feels more and more comfortable working with his father's characters and ideas. Still, he stresses that the motivation for both him and Larry Todd to build on his father's work is one of admiration, and a heartfelt desire to share with others "the potential that the Bodé stuff has."

"I feel like I'm keeping my dad alive," he adds warmly. "He's in my mind. Keeping his world alive is a pleasure to me and a way of keeping him around. Keeping his stuff alive is, in essence, keeping *him* alive."

As for why his father's style continues to appeal to fans, for Bodé, the answer is simple: the meld of his influences combines with the spirit from within. "[His style] is very unique," the artist decides. "It's a hybrid of my father's influences. It comes from Walt Kelly, Wally Wood, V.T. [*Alley Oop*] Hamlin and, of course, Walt Disney. My father compiled all these into his own style, and came out being unique from all the rest. Many people notice that. I think people just know that his heart was *really* in the work. That's why he acquired such a cult following."

This style and enthusiasm worked its way under Mark Bodé's skin, although he says he never consciously tried to duplicate his father's style. "It's something that I don't think about at all," he shrugs. "I can't peg it. I can't pinpoint what I take from him. It's more of a thing we share, rather than what I take from his style. My own style *evolves* from it.

"And you can see the difference when you hold up a page of his and a page of mine. I have a different touch with the pen. He often worked toward simplicity and refinement, whereas I like more detail than he did, and I really enjoy coloring my artwork to bring it to life. Though he led me in that direction—I absorbed many things from him, his color sense and ability came into me and added to what I already knew or would learn—I can't peg anything that makes me imitate him. It just *happens*."

In addition to adapting unfinished ideas of his father's, Bodé and his mother, Barbara Bodé, have been working to get published as much of Vaughn's work as possible.

"She has been the sole proprietor of Bodé Productions since my father's death. Over the years she has learned a lot about the business," Bodé explains. "She has a mail-order business, and she takes it into her own hands to get my dad's stuff printed. It was in his will that my mother owns the Bodé estate. So, whenever we're dealing with contracts specifically having to do with Vaughn Bodé, my mother is in charge of the negotiating. I'm more or less an art director or rightful heir to the Bodé style."

As for giving Bodé's work the public exposure it deserves, the next few years may prove important for both father and son. In addition to Tundra's publications of *Cobalt 60*, *Puffball*, Vaughn Bodé's *Poem Toons*, and a collection of Mark's *Zara Tungi* strips, Bodé reveals that plans have been set in motion for a *Cobalt 60* animated feature, to be produced by

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THE ZONE CONTINUUM

In a world above, superhumans engage in a dance of death.

By ERIC NIDEROST

There's something about New York City that lends itself to the fantastic. Television's *Beauty & the Beast* envisioned a secret subterranean world of tunnels and galleries beneath Gotham's pavements, peopled by society's "walking wounded" and guarded by a man-beast named Vincent.

But suppose there is another society, not below the asphalt, but inhabiting the upper reaches of New York's skyscrapers? Suppose these men and women, while fully human, are so in tune with the Earth that they are affected by its electromagnetic fields? And finally, suppose they are embroiled in a great civil war, not only for their own survival, but to prevent—or hasten—the entire planet's destruction?

That's the premise of *Zone Continuum*, a new SF series from Caliber Press. The four-issue mini-series is being written and drawn by Bruce Zick, a relative newcomer to comics noted for his *Argosy* series serialized in *Dark Horse Presents*.

Before he took the plunge into panelology, Zick worked as an animator—and "animated" might also describe his personal approach. As he relaxes in his Oregon home, it's clear his enthusiasm for *Zone Continuum* knows no bounds.

Actually, it was his animation background and fascination with urbanscapes that gave birth to this project. "I got my direction," he explains, "from doing Saturday morning cartoon shows like *Ghostbusters*, which was set in New York. After years of doing city backgrounds, I wanted to do a series that would let me do architecture."

Zone Continuum spins a fabulous tale of an ancient human race, groups of whom are living in specific electromagnetic zones on Earth. The story focuses on Zone 27, Manhattan Island, and the adventures of one zone resident named Talon.

All Zone Continuum Art By & Copyright 1991 Bruce Zick/Courtesy Caliber Press

"The basic concept," Zick elaborates, "is that the whole Earth is subdivided into electromagnetic zones, and they all fit together like a jigsaw puzzle. The zones change over time, and the boundary lines between the zones change. The ancient ones are so attuned to their own zones, they can't cross over to others."

A sub-group of ancient ones, The Partners, are guardians of traditions and rites. Comments Zick, "There are good Partners and bad Partners, and the story focuses on them. The bad guy of the piece is another Partner named Spear."

As the book opens, these people are in a state of crisis. "Zones are shrinking, altering, and in some cases, causing mutations," says Zick. "Zone 27 in particular has been shrinking fast, yet the Partners simply can't escape to another zone; it literally means death to do so. So, they're prisoners in their own spaces."

Changes in technology, coupled with the destruction of the Earth's natural resources, are also having an effect on the Partners and their zones. "That's why," Zick explains, "the Partners are trying to preserve the planet, as well as maintain the integrity of their zones."

Zick says his approach to the characters is a realistic one. "This story is taking place *today*," he notes. "It's *not* a futuristic version of today, or a post-apocalyptic kind of thing, where the world is in ruins and decadent.

"No, it's happening right now, taking place right above our heads. I

Doing city backgrounds for cartoons like *Ghostbusters* led *Zone Continuum* creator Bruce Zick to do "a series that would let me do architecture."

want the characters to be accessible, with normal human emotions, failings, problems—but on a more epic scale. In short, I want the series to be rooted in *reality*."

Not that the Partners and their fellow beings aren't different from the common human herd below them. "They do live some thousands of years," the artist concedes, "and they are physiologically different. In each Zone, Partners have a slightly different resonance, and the sum of their parts produces harmony.

"But when two of them are identical, it produces an imbalance. Talon and his arch-rival Spear have this problem; they have identical electromagnetic fields, so they can't exist in the same spot.

"And Spear believes that destruction is good—it's part of Earth's natural cycle to cleanse itself through destruction. By contrast, Talon is the leader of those Partners who are trying to *prevent* a major cataclysm."

Zick confides that the Partners do live in the normal world, at least to a point. It's just that normal humans aren't on the same wavelength. "They do interact with the world," the artist insists, "but there's something about normal humans that makes them physically uncomfortable, in terms of our resonance versus their resonance.

"They can be around normal humans, but after a half-hour or so, they become ill. So, they do interact, but on a limited basis. Talon, for example, is president of a bank and trust that's a worldwide conglomerate."

There's a reason why much of the action takes place on the top floors of Gotham's steel-and-concrete monoliths. "The zones," Zick reveals, "have tops and bottoms as well as sides. Zone 27's bottom corresponds to the 15th floor of a building. The Partners can't go below that to street level."

What? Aside from an occasional rooftop eatery, the Partners can't patronize New York's international cuisine? "Well," Zick laughs, "there's always take-out delivery!"

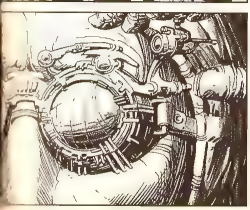
Zick explains that his background is in backgrounds: "I've been what they call a 'background designer,' a person who sets up the tone or style. Most recently, I did the background designs for Steven Spielberg's *Tiny Toon Adventures*. I also background-designed *The Rescuers Down Under*. In that film, I was also an 'inspiration' or 'conceptual' artist, detailing the whole style of what a picture may look like."

Though Zick doesn't want to seem preachy, and entertainment is the keynote, there are some issues and themes he hopes his readers will pick up, one being that "everything is interrelated on this planet. What happens in the Persian Gulf, the Andes Mountains or the Brazilian rain forest affects its balance. It's not just a matter of the Greenhouse Effect or the ozone layer's disappearance.

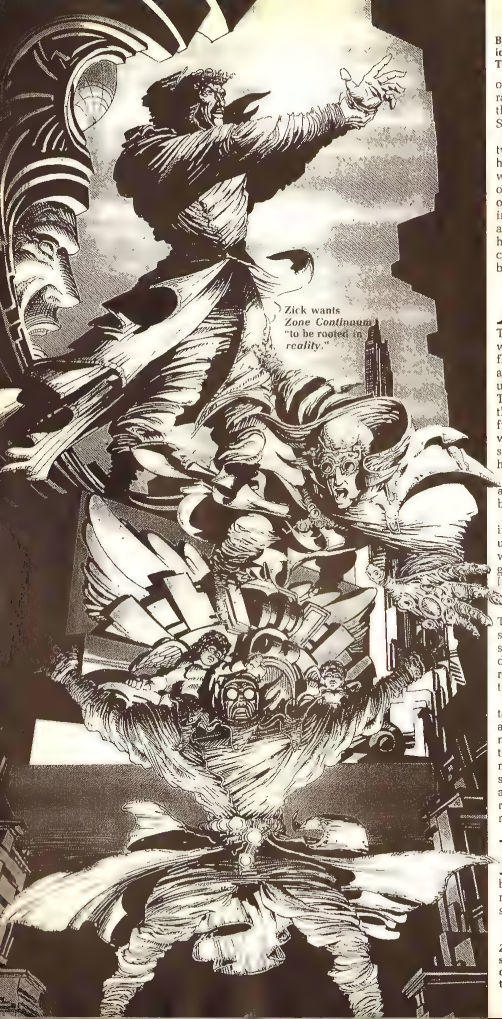
"There's a lot of cyberpunk [in this series], because it shows how the digital computer revolution is doing its part to affect Earth's natural balance—all this electronic data pouring forth. That, too, can offset Earth's natural cycles."

Another cautionary theme deals with technology and the ambivalence toward it that many people feel. "In order to exist," Zick says, "the Partners have developed an over-reliance

Zick notes that Talon can't really fly, which is probably *not* the best thing for the hero to discover just now.



Talon's one of the first in his Zone to have zone goggles, which enhance his maneuverability and help him see his enemies.



Because their electromagnetic fields are identical, this spot's not big enough for Talon and his arch-rival, Spear.

on technology. There's a technology race between the good Partners and the bad Partners, between Talon and Spear and their organizations.

"In some ways, Talon is torn between the old and the new. On one hand, there's the tech race, and yet he wants to go back to the old ways. The original Partners were like samurai or ninja, relying on their own natural instincts. But they got away from that, and it's sad. It's something that's happening to us. We're getting too complex and technological—and, in being that way, we're losing touch."

At first glance, the *Continuum* series looks more like the Twilight Zone than Zone 27. Take, for example, Talon's fantastic wardrobe. In some scenes, he sports flowing coats, weird-looking glasses and gadget-filled gloves that look like updated versions of Dick Tracy's old TV wristwatch. Zick acknowledges that some of this is a bit strange at first, but notes, "They generally do wear 'normal' clothes, except that, since they've lived longer, they may have different tastes from the rest of us. If you lived in many centuries and many cultures, your tastes might be different, too."

Many of the seemingly bizarre items are really technological aids used in their internal battle. The weird glasses, for example, "are zone goggles, to help them see each other [i.e. see the enemy], and maneuver through the Zone.

"In some panels, it seems as if Talon is flying—he really isn't—just sort of gliding through. The Zone, you see, is unstable, and it's also unpredictable. There are all sorts of currents, eddies and strange spots within the Zone's electromagnetic field."

Talon and Spear are locked in mortal combat, a test of intellect and skill as well as strength and superior technology. As they—and their organizations—battle each other, the outcome may be nothing less than the future survival of not only the zones, but of all life on Earth. And there's no surrender in this contest; the only alternative to victory is death.

Everything isn't technology, scientific jargon and "panel pyrotechnics" in the contest between Talon and Spear. There's room, too, for a poignant romance, a subplot that Zick calls "a great

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***Zone Continuum* is much like today's society, says Zick. "We're getting too complex and technological—and, in being that way, losing touch."**

X-O MANOWAR

Move over Iron Man, RoboCop and Deathlok—there's a new armored warrior in comics [illegible], and he's battling in the Valiant universe.

X-O Manowar, the star of Valiant's newest monthly book, is a hero with a conscience. He isn't a cyborg trapped in his armor, nor is he a millionaire playboy who dons an iron suit whenever he's in the mood for action.

Co-creator Bob Layton likes to think of *X-O Manowar* as a hi-tech Conan, a barbarian inside a sentient suit of armor.

"Barry [Windsor-Smith] refers to it as 'What if Conan the Barbarian had Iron Man's armor?' He would be the baddest mother in the valley!" laughs Layton, who explains that this set of armor is the product of an alien technology, and worn by a Visigoth captured nearly 2,000 years ago.

"He's not really bonded into the armor; it's not a Deathlok sort of thing," says Layton, who collaborated with Valiant editor Jim Shooter in creating the character. "See, I've always had trouble with someone being bitten by a radioactive water buffalo or that kind of thing. Even Iron Man's armor stretches credibility. But, none of us could explain an alien technology if it really existed, so there's a certain mystique to it. We don't know how it works.

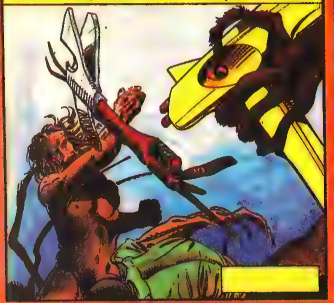
"The X-O armors are biomechanical—they're grown like trees. It takes 200 years to grow one of these things. They're sentient, but they don't talk, like Deathlok. The armor feels him. It needs intelligence to fully function; it can only do things if actuated upon by outside thought. It's a true symbiot, in many ways. It's a telepathic, empathic relationship. It can do things, translate things for him, but only if he thought-actuates it—on its own, it's just a hunk of silicon and metal.

"It was designed by the aliens to combat humans, because they're physically inferior. They kidnapped Earth people to examine their muscle structures, and so it was designed for that."

Bob Layton lets a barbarian don the world's deadliest armor.

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

Don't expect too many survivors from *X-O Manowar*'s first four issues, warns co-creator Bob Layton.



All X-O Manowar Characters & Art ©Copyright 1991 Voyager Communications Inc.

Art Barry Windsor-Smith&Bob Layton

Layton came up with the concept for *X-O Manowar* after doing Marvel's *Iron Man* for eight years, and becoming increasingly frustrated.

"I was locked into a lot of Marvel continuity that I found annoying," says Layton. "I was thinking, 'If I had it to do my way, this is what I would do.' That was the genesis, and it snowballed into *X-O*.

"Still, it's not very similar to *Iron Man*. I've always been fascinated with 'men out of time,' and this character is a barbarian who's brought to the present day. It's the dichotomy that interests me. He'll look upon society with very innocent eyes in many ways, but have tremendous power in order to change it."

X-O Manowar will be a solid part of the Valiant Universe, which includes *Solar* (CS #20), *Harbinger* and *Magnus, Robot Fighter* (CS #18). "In a way, it's another time-travel story, and *Solar* is involved with something like that, as well. They're both men out of time. My desire is for this Valiant Universe that we're creating to have some more contemporary characters, and this one just seemed to be perfect!"

A four-issue storyline kicks off the series, although Layton says each issue stands alone.

"It has to do with him acclimating to our society and to the armor, and discovering what the armor does. This is the epilogue to the alien invasion that has taken place in *Solar* and *Magnus*. The first four issues involve him coming to Earth and establishing his rapport with the armor. The only

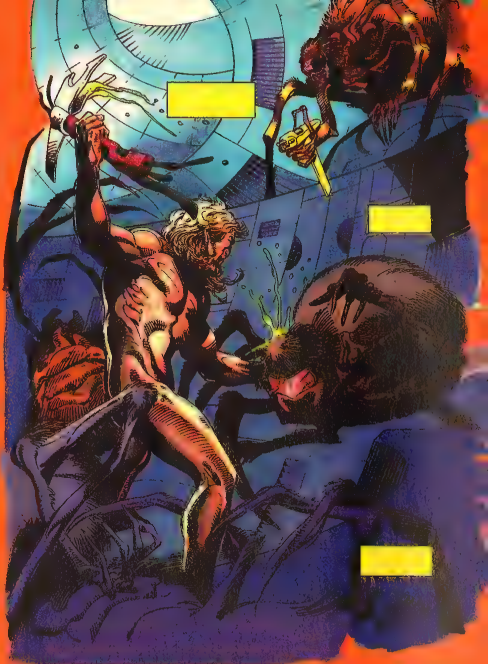
The Harbinger appear in issue #3 of *X-O Manowar*, but Layton hopes to one day team *all* the Valiant heroes together.

means of escape for the aliens who've been stranded here is the X-O armor. If the aliens can extract Aric from the armor, they can use it to build a ship and escape. But, getting it away from this guy is a problem, because he doesn't like them! They're in hiding, their fleet has taken off or been destroyed by Solar; X-O is just trying to assimilate at this point, and they're pursuing him with great fervor.

"Their escape ship was destroyed by X-O—it's the one he escapes from. So, they're stranded, and their only hope to get off is the armor. The first four issues involve him dealing with the remnants of this invasion force, then I will go onto other things."

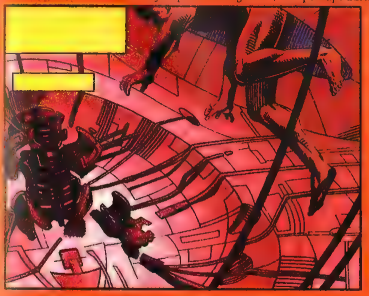
Layton explains that the first issues establish the hero. Supporting characters will be brought in more slowly. "He's going to have a female supporting character who believes him to be a foreign businessman or dignitary, not realizing that he's really from another time and place. I'll start bringing people in a little each time as we expand his world a bit. There will be a few characters in the first four issues, but they won't be survivors who last through the whole series."

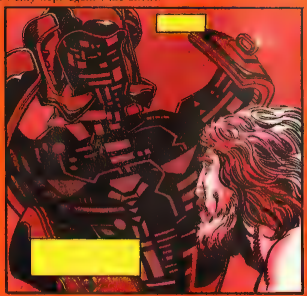
X-O Manowar will slide into the role of Earth's protector as the series develops. "These aliens are evil guys who've been running around doing stuff for decades," Layton says, "and he has been a slave aboard their ship since he was a kid. He has been living in this sterile, horrible environment in space all this time, and he comes here and it's a wonderful world, as far as he's concerned. He decides, 'I'm gonna protect it; this is where I'm gonna live!' with very simplistic barbarian logic. It's like, 'I have the power to do something about it? Then, I'm gonna damn well do something about it!' "

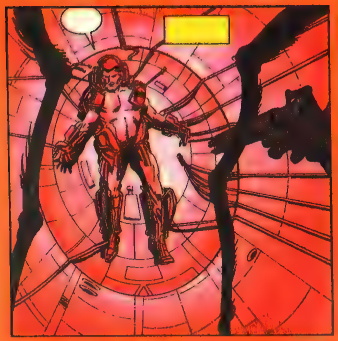


All X-O Interior Art: Barry Windsor Smith/Bob Layton/Jorge Gonzalez

Aric discovers the aliens' only hope of leaving Earth, and perhaps Earth's only hope against the aliens.







Several months from now, *X-O Manowar* will see the ties that bind the Valiant Universe draw even closer.

"The aliens attack in the future where there are X-O armors there as well, and in upcoming issues of *Solar* where the first invasion takes place, there will be armies of X-Os. They're dealing with Solar, so they don't stand a good chance, but they're there! We see X-O Manowar as part of the whole scenario. My theory is that this technology and his attitude is really the seed to Magnus' time; he's really the catalyst that brings the world to Magnus' day.

"Once we get all our books firmly established, I would like to do a team book with X-O, Solar, the Harbinger and all of these characters. But, that's later, after our readership is firmly established. I always loved things like that. Face it, the mainstay of the other companies has always been the Avengers and the Justice League, and there's no reason in the world we can't do something like that ourselves. I would like to—it just depends on whether the demand's there. Time will tell."

Layton and Shooter worked closely with Barry Windsor-Smith on the character's creation. The artist even laid out the first issue, which Layton says was a treat. "Barry did most of the design work, in terms of creating the aliens, the settings and the hardware. He was very intrigued by our concepts, and he volunteered to jump in and kick the book off. I wasn't about to turn him down—as far as I'm concerned, Barry is the finest illustrator working in the business right now. I was tickled that he wanted to do it, and he did a tremendous job. It has been a long time since he did such straightforward storytelling, and I think everybody will be blown away."

The second issue will introduce the regular series penciller, newcomer Ted Halsted. "He's tremendously talented, and when he came in, I was saying I thought he would be perfect for the book. He has a real feel for the technical side, and he has a lot of power in his drawing," says Layton, who'll be inking all of the issues.

Layton has been working with Jim Shooter for 16 years now, and he calls their collaboration almost "telepathic."

"We just think alike," Layton explains. "We worked together closely on the origin of Solar and together on *Magnus, Robot Fighter*. I've even had my hands on the

(continued on page 66)

DEATH FLIGHT OF THE DOOM STAFFEL

Guns blazing, G-8 & His Battle Aces zoom out of crimson skies.

By WILL MURRAY

Art: Tom Truman/George Evans

Mention the name G-8 to a modern comics fan, and he's liable to think vegetable juice. As in "I coulda had a G-8!"

But during the 1930s and '40s, *G-8 & His Battle Aces* was a fabulously popular pulp magazine, one which consistently outsold its sister publication, *The Spider*.

The creation of prolific air-war writer Robert J. Hogan, G-8 was an American spy/ace, his true identity unknown. Headquartered at Le Bourget Field outside Paris, G-8 flew his unmarked Spad behind enemy lines against a veritable menagerie of fantastic villains. His titular battle aces were the bickering duo of hulking Bull Martin and his wise-cracking nemesis, Nippy Weston.

In 1933, pulps glorifying the aviators of the Great War were booming. Popular Publications publisher Harry Steeger believed there would be a market for an air-war magazine in the mold of *Doc Savage* and *The Spider*. He turned to Hogan, one of the top writers in the field, and together they conceived the legendary Flying Spy—as G-8 was called.

But the magazine they birthed—it premiered in October 1933 with a bizarre tale of bat planes vs. Spads called *The Bat Staffel*—was no dry chronicle of an American Red Baron. *G-8*'s World War I is not something out of the history books. It was a place in which the pre-Nazi German hordes fought side-by-side with mad scientists, zombies, defrosted Vikings, Martians, Lovecraftian monsters and other wildly improbable comrades-in-arms undreamed of by Baron Manfred Von Richthofen.

In modern terms, *G-8*'s milieu would be called an alternate-world version of World War I. Back then, it was just a gimmick that enabled the magazine to outlast the air-war fad.

Now, Argosy Communications, the successor to Harry Steeger's Popular Publications, is bringing back *G-8* under its Blazing Comics imprint. This isn't the first time. In 1966, Gold Key did a little-remembered one-shot, adapting *Death is My Destiny*.

Blazing Comics' *G-8 & His Battle Aces* is also a one-shot, but a second issue waits, appropriately enough, in the wings for next year. Chuck Dixon, who once planned to team G-8 with Airboy in the Eclipse revival series, scripts. Had Dixon gotten his wish then, G-8 would have been updated to World War II. In this series, the writer is sticking with the basics.

"This *is* the original G-8," Dixon promises. "There's no updating. We're not doing a Dark Knight number on G-8. You're getting Robert Hogan's stuff transmogrified to comics."

As heroes go, G-8 was Central Casting. Square-jawed, steely-eyed, none of the 110 published novels ever revealed his true identity. He was simply G-8, a code-name designed to evoke visions of an aerial G-man, but was in fact taken from the G-8 Ranch, where Hogan spent summer 1917 as a young ranch hand.

But that's no hindrance to Dixon, who sees the series as focusing less on the hero than on his adversaries.

"The big interest in the series is in its villains," Dixon says flatly. "We've done Stahlmaske. The second issue is Herr Grun. And Herr Doktor Krueger runs through every one of our stories so far. He's the one who sends these weird-looking goons out to do away with G-8. And it *never* seems to go the way he plans!"

A SCANT THREE SPADS FLY TO A VALLEY DEEP BEHIND THE ENEMY'S FRONTLINE
BUT THESE ARE NOT JUST ANY WAR-PLANES. THEY ARE THE FIGHTING MACHINES OF AMERICA'S FLYING SPY AND HIS VALIANT COMRADES ...
G-8
G-8
THE SHRIEK OF WIND THRU GUYWIRES, THE CHATTER OF V SPANDAUS, THE DRONE OF TH ROYCE ENGINES ...
G-8, CODE NAME FOR A MAN OF MYSTERY
G-8, A MAN WITHOUT A NAME.
HIS MISSION IS TO BRING THE IMPERIAL GERMAN ARMY TO ITS KNEES.
WITH HIS COMPANIONS, NIPPY WESTON AND BULL MARTIN, THEY HAVE MADE THIS TRIO OF SPADS FEARED FROM THE TRENCHES TO THE KAISER'S KRIEGSRAUM.
THEIR MISSION TODAY IS TO INVESTIGATE A MYSTERIOUS VALLEY IN THE ALSACE ... A VALLEY PERPETUALLY ENSHROUDED IN DENSE CLOUDS.
DROME OF

Art: Sam Glanzman

Dr. Krueger was G-8's Lex Luthor—although he more closely resembles a German Dr. Sivana. G-8 battled Krueger in his first novel and in nearly 30 return engagements with screaming titles like *Three Fly with Satan*, *The Falcon Flies with the Damned* and *Here Flies the Hawk of Hell*. Often, Krueger teamed up with other *G-8* villains. Recurring bad guys and crossovers are common comic book devices today, but for a Depression-era pulp magazine, Hogan was doing something revolutionary. Dixon is continuing the Hogan tradition.

"The first issue is Stahlmaske's origin and the introduction of Herr Doktor Krueger," he says. "Stahlmaske has an origin which is remarkably like Dr. Doom, and we get to see what he's about. We're working off the Ken Kelly drawings done for the Dimedia paperback covers. Stahlmaske has the same look. He wears a bullet-shaped helmet."

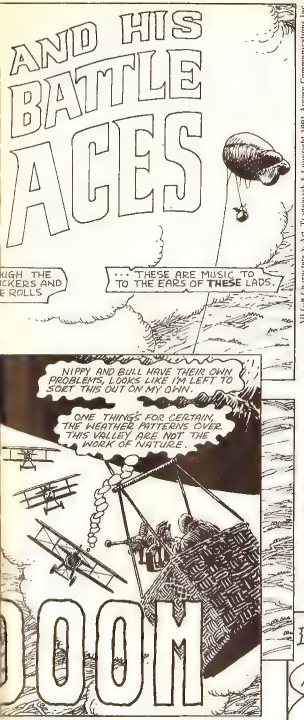
And the plot is formula *G-8*, Dixon observes.

"Big surprise," he chuckles. "Krueger sends Stahlmaske on a vengeance mission to kill G-8. Of course, they come up with a wacky new weapon to take down the entire Allied Air Force. We also have R-12, the female character, behind enemy lines gathering information for G-8."

Blazing Comics president Joel Frieman, who is launching *G-8* as a tribute to Harry Steeger—who died in December 1990—has since decided to switch the order of the first two issues so that "Grun-the Green Terror" replaces the original first story, "The Drome of Doom."

"I felt that Grun would be a more powerful figure," Frieman explains. "Also, I have an understanding of Harry Steeger's technique in editing, and I just know that he would have done the Grun story first—especially after seeing Tim Truman's cover."

Herr Grun—real name Rod San-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NIPPY AND BULL HAVE THEIR OWN PROBLEMS, LOOKS LIKE I'M LEFT TO SORT THIS OUT ON MY OWN.
ONE THING'S FOR CERTAIN, THE WEATHER PATTERNS OVER THIS VALLEY ARE NOT THE WORK OF NATURE.
OOM

All G-8 Characters & Art © Tadeusuk & Copyright 1991 Acquire Communications Inc

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Born in 1933, *G-8 & His Battle Aces* fought a thrillingly weird WWI of the air, thanks to writer Robert J. Hogan.

Art: Steve Ghraman

tos—is one of Hogan's more nefarious creations—a green-skinned, knuckle-walking Neanderthal-like American who has gone over to the German side. Raised in Haiti, he is a practitioner of voodoo.

"Grun is a big simian-looking guy with hair hanging down his face," Dixon explains. "Krueger views him as a slave. 'You just go out and kill G-8. Here's a neat weapon for you to use, now get out of my lab. I'm busy.' But Grun is always thinking, 'I'm not anybody's stooge. I can tear this guy's head off. But because he's giving me all this neat weaponry, I'll tolerate this.' He and Krueger have a very unstable relationship."

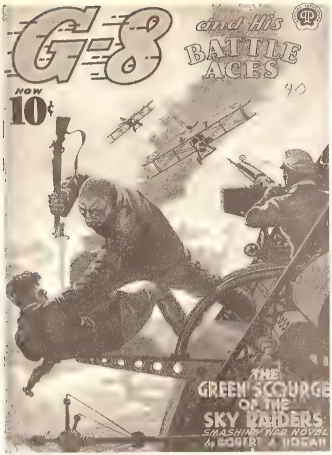
By himself, Herr Grun isn't exactly cocktail party material.

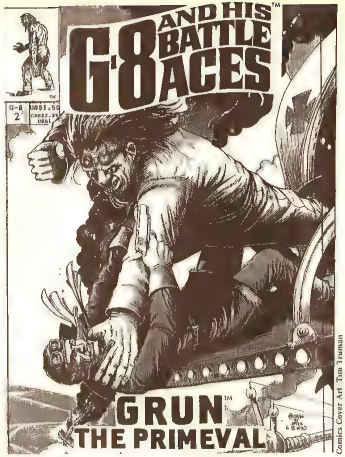
"Grun will jump on an Allied airplane and tear the pilot out of it," says Dixon. "It's a great image. In the story's beginning, G-8 and his guys are flying along and they see this pilot come screaming down out of the clouds and say, 'Where's his plane?' A few seconds later, the plane comes spinning down, too. And then Grun crows that his latest technique is ripping pilots out of their cockpits!"

If you get the idea that *G-8* is slightly bent, that's Robert J. Hogan's *G-8*. It's also Chuck Dixon's take, as well.

"*Nothing* is too outrageous for this series," he says gleefully. "We take the Grun origin and combine it with a Doktor Krueger story about a time

A veteran of more than 30 clashes with G-8, the master villain Herr Doktor Krueger returns to haunt the heroic ace.





Comics Cover Art: Tim Truman

Herr Grun battles G-8 51 years ago on a pulp cover (left) and today, in Tim Truman's comics version of the same image.

dislocation machine. It's an Einstein-Edison-Steinmetz machine. Nothing ever comes of it—in our story anyway. But it's something that's open for the future."

The Blazing Comics approach to *G-8* is to adapt the original novels, but with a twist.

Dixon explains: "Joel will literally send me half of a pulp story and then another half of another pulp story, and say, 'Wed these two together.' We're sticking with what Hogan did—we're just condensing it!"

"The Drome of Doom," for instance, is a combination of two consecutive 1937 *G-8* novels, *Scourge of the Steel Mask* (reprinted in 1985 by Friedman's Dimedia, Inc.) and *Patrol of the Murder Masters*. It's an unusual collaboration, but it seems to work.

"Yeah, this is one where I'm a co-pilot," Dixon laughs. "They're Joel's characters and I'm basically going along with it."

Dixon's other collaborator is artist Sam Glanzman.

"Sam has a gritty style that *is* World War I," Frieman says. "My favorite documentary series was the WWI series PBS used to do. For some odd reason, Sam's style is reminiscent of that."

"I'm glad to see Sam on board," Dixon adds. "I've worked with him through 4-Winds, though we never collaborated. He's one of the most underrated guys in comics. He can draw WWI airplanes without plastering his nose in a reference book all day."

Although Glanzman is noted for his realistic depictions of war, *G-8 & His Battle Aces* will have a schizophrenic, quasi-realistic look.

"The characters are exaggerated," Dixon allows. "It's not going to look like a DC war comic. But where the planes are actual planes, they'll be accurate. Sam really enjoys the archaic weapons—the crazy stuff we make up."

Reviving *G-8 & His Battle Aces* might seem to be flying in the face of comic book history. Aviation heroes from Enemy Ace to Airboy have never set sales records, and G-8 himself has crashed twice in paperback reprints. His most successful revival was the 1969 Berkley Books series, which today is best recalled for its haunting Jim Steranko covers.

"I don't think a whole lot of people remember G-8," Chuck Dixon admits. "Just the fact that he was once a pulp character. I guess you can make some hay out of that. I don't try to figure out the marketability of anything I do. That's beyond me. It surprised me how well *The Spider* has done."

"Since I acquired Popular," Joel Frieman concludes, "I realized I've always owed a debt to Harry Steeger. *G-8 & His Battle Aces* is the final phase of payment. I was just upset that he's not alive to see *The Spider* comic, or for that matter, *G-8*. Had he been still around, this is something we would have done together." CS

Although most aviation heroes have crashed and burned in comics, his re-creators hope G-8 will experience a safer landing.

Walk With Beauty

By KYLE COUNTS

Animator James Baxter spent a year animating the lovely Belle and won a beauty of his own.

For someone who makes two-dimensional characters come to life, James Baxter isn't a terribly animated fellow. One might attribute the 24-year-old artist's low-key demeanor to the fact that he—one of 10 supervising animators on Walt Disney Pictures' *Beauty & the Beast*—is British. Or perhaps it's due to a combination of exhaustion and nervousness: Not only did he recently conclude a year of work on *Beauty & the Beast*, the studio's newest animated feature, but he will soon marry a woman with a remarkable resemblance to Belle.

As one of two supervising animators assigned to Belle (Mark Henn was the other), the animated fairy tale's dreamy-eyed but spunky heroine (Baxter addresses her as the "gull"), it was Baxter's job to make sure that the artists working under him delivered their work on time and that it was consistent with Belle's character design. Baxter animated the first few scenes himself "to set the tone" for Belle.

Supervising other artists was a new experience for Baxter, one that he initially wasn't comfortable with. "This was the first time I ever had to tell anyone 'what to do,' so to speak. I would assign them [a scene to animate] with their input—I would ask them which bits they were really keen on doing, making sure I got the bits I really wanted to do, so no egos got hurt. That was pretty tricky with seven artists, 'cause everyone wanted to do the good stuff."

Baxter believes he was chosen to animate Belle because of his past association with two other Disney heroines. "I had done some work on Ariel in *The Little Mermaid*—little bits and pieces, nothing very meaty or spectacular. I had also done some [work on] Jessica in *Roger Rabbit*. So, I had a little bit of experience as far as animating women. They picked up on the fact that I like to do very graceful, very balletic animation, and that was a quality they were looking for. And I draw pretty solidly."

Told that *Beauty & the Beast* co-director Kirk Wise said in COMICS SCENE #23 that he regretted not being able to get more of Baxter's work on screen, Baxter replies, "Me too. But, unfortunately, the way these films are scheduled...with a character like Belle, who has 30 minutes of screen time, *one* person can't do [all the animation] in a year. We ended up having seven full-time people on Belle,

"Although Belle is looking for romance—and who isn't?—she's not blinded by beauty, which is what Gaston symbolizes," says Baxter. "In another Disney movie, he might be her prince, but this film is rooted in a more modern mentality."

and a few others picking up bits."

Joining the production "very late" made his job as supervising animator more difficult, says Baxter, who had to do corrections on *The Rescuers Down Under* "right up until six weeks before release." Normally, the animator assigned to handle a particular character spends time nailing down the character's design, but *Beauty & the Beast*'s tight schedule prevented Baxter from making more than minor changes to Belle.

"Belle's design was pretty much set by other people," he confesses. "Once I started moving her around, little things changed, like details on her dress. But I really didn't have time [to make any major changes]: they needed the stuff on screen pretty much from week one."

He attended live-action shooting sessions, helmed by the film's co-director Gary Trousdale, to ensure that model Sherri Stoner gave a "performance" that would generate the proper reference footage for the artists working on Belle. "Her movements were very much tied down to the soundtrack," Baxter explains. "She would often take quite a few takes just to get from A to B in the time required."

Baxter was also present at the sessions to make sure that Trousdale's camera angles matched the layout. Though Baxter didn't use what was filmed, he found it useful that it helped him "communicate to the other animators what I wanted." A few animators made video stats of various live-action key frames, but Baxter was content to use the actual footage as a "starting-off" point.

The artist also watched ballerinas on videotape "for the way they walk, especially. Unlike *The Little Mermaid*, much of this stuff takes place on land, and it's much more difficult to animate stuff when you can't just float around the screen. It has to be very convincing. A girl's walk, especially, is hideously difficult to do. You can either go way over the top—and make her look like Jessica—or do something that's very realistic. That's pretty much why we shot live-action, to get those difficult physical movements down. And even though we did shoot it, I varied from Sherri's walk, which I found a bit too little-girlish. I tried to make it a bit more graceful."

Had he been part of the production from day one, Baxter believes he would still have chosen to animate Belle over all the film's other characters. "I've been longing to do this kind of stuff for a while," he says. "I like to do broad, cartoony stuff as well as realistic stuff. But I really wanted to see how far I could go on my own without using very much live-action reference in creating a realistic human being, a girl with grace."

Given free reign with regard to her design, Baxter says he would have tried to "push it a little more away from what they had. I probably would have made her a little more angular, maybe used some elements of design which aren't from this studio. Which is tricky, because the entire picture has to hang together design-wise."

He catches himself in mid-sentence

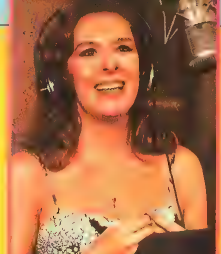
True Beauty

The day I saw the script, I said this is *me* at 18," says Paige O'Hara, who voiced Belle in *Beauty & the Beast*. "This is perfect for me. I told my agent I *had* to be up for this."

The actress auditioned five grueling times for the role of Belle, the heroine who captivates the princely Beast. "It got down to a few of us who auditioned quite a bit. I did change my voice a few times—I kept thinking to be 18, I had to talk real high. *Misconception*. For two hours, you don't want to hear a really high voice. So, I really loved the fact I could use my normal voice."

Although O'Hara has many theatrical credits under her belt, including *Annie Get Your Gun* and *Anything Goes*, recording the voice for an animated character was completely unlike any previous experience. "I don't know how you can even compare the techniques [between voice recording and stage performance] because it's *so* different. But it's a bit like being on camera. The camera loves some people," says O'Hara, "and it's the same thing with a microphone, some voices it loves, and other voices it doesn't. It's just a matter of luck—whether your voice clicks with that microphone or not.

"Jodi Benson [Ariel in *The Little Mermaid*]—the microphone loves her



Paige O'Hara is the beautiful voice behind the title Beauty in the film.

"I ended up auditioning five times for the role of Belle," says O'Hara, "but from the very beginning, I felt very confident because I knew this was my part."

All Beauty & The Beast Photos & Art Copyright 1991 The Walt Disney Company

voice. And I am just *floored* at what Robby Benson did with the Beast." When O'Hara heard that Benson would be voicing the character, her initial reaction was "Oh, he's too cute and sweet." But after watching Benson in action during the recording sessions, she changed her tune: "The man is amazing. He knew *exactly* what to do with the microphone."

Most of the Howard Ashman-Alan Menken songs for the film were recorded *before* setting to work on spoken dialogue. However, six months into the project, the creative team added "There's Something Sweet," "a little duet in the snow between the Beast and I. I'm glad they did that, because it's one of my favorite sections."

O'Hara recorded most of her dialogue alone with the directors. "I would have to literally imagine how the other actors were acting, and respond." However, on occasion, she would work in tandem with either Benson or Richard White, who played the villain, Gaston (see page 41).

"We did some sessions where we would read the scenes as if we were doing it in a movie, and they would record the whole scene. Some [line readings] they took, and some they didn't. If nothing else, even if they took the line readings *after* the ones we read together, that helped set it up," she says, explaining that she then knew how the other actors would respond to her character.

The recording process "was very intimate. When we did the death scene, the Beast's last scene, the directors would bring the lights down to almost black and let me record in the dark. It helped me get in the mood, to prepare for it emotionally."

Directors Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise "were very specific about what they wanted. I would take one line and do 20 or 30 line readings on that line. They would say, 'OK now, let's try it again, with a little more sadness in the voice, and lower your pitch.' Or, 'You're a little too old, Paige. Youthen it up a little.' Their ears were amazing," she says. "They directed me to play it like I was playing *a* film. They said if you play it very real, the characters will be more realistic.

"I don't think that totally applies to the comic characters, but it does as far as the Beast and myself. And after seeing the finished film, I know why they did it. I was very surprised at first because they took the more low-keyed, subtle takes as opposed to the comic or broader takes."

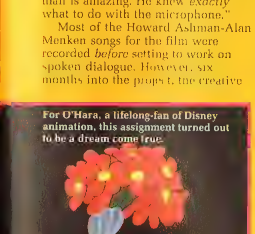
The animators also videotaped the actors in action in front of the microphone in order to study specific facial expressions. "They copy the way your mouth and eyes go," says O'Hara. "There are a few expressions in the movie that are definitely mine. They took them to the nth degree further, but the way she laughs, her eyes and stuff are very much mine."

However, the first time the actress saw Belle—inked, colored, in action and on the wide screen—she was a bit disconcerted. "It was odd, actually, but in some ways, I felt I was watching myself when I was a young girl. It was weird. Honestly, I had to adjust to it. Really close friends of mine felt the same way. But they also said after three or four minutes, they were totally into it, and that's how I felt. I left it behind and said, 'Oh, that's Belle.'"

Belle "is certainly a better person than I was at 18. I was a bit of a brat. It took me years of rejection and growing up to know what I know now, that Belle knew at 18. That's what I found kind of extraordinary about her character. She's a very wise, compassionate young woman for that age.

"And she's what I would like to be. Unselfish, compassionate, bright, well-read. I try to be those things—it's something I go for, but don't always succeed at. Belle's a really good Disney heroine," says Paige O'Hara. "She's someone kids can look up to."

—Lynne Stephens



For O'Hara, a lifelong fan of Disney animation, this assignment turned out to be a dream come true.

and pauses. "Hmmm...It might not be such a good thing if all the animators designed their own characters. For a film to be successful, design-wise it should come from one hand –like the way many characters [for Disney features] were designed by Milt [Kahl] in the '60s, or Fred Moore in the '40s. All the characters should fit into the same world. *Sleeping Beauty* did that very well. The design in that picture is incredible."

The mention of *Sleeping Beauty* brings up the question of where Belle fits into the archives of Disney's animated leading ladies. "She's obviously a Disney heroine in the Briar Rose/Cinderella tradition," Baxter muses, "although the Disney heroine has become a lot more gutsy with the arrival of *The Little Mermaid*. Now, they're not just girls who let things happen to them; they're much more the instigators of the action.

"Physically, we tried to make her more European looking than previous Disney heroines," explains Baxter, "with fuller lips, a little bit darker eyebrows and slightly smaller eyes than Ariel."

"Although Belle is looking for romance—and who isn't?—she's not blinded by beauty, which is what Gaston symbolizes. In another [Disney] movie, *he* might be her prince. This film is very much rooted in a more modern mentality. She's going after someone who's right for her, personality-wise, rather than someone who's just a big, handsome lug."

Characters like Ariel and Belle have been known to make men swoon and little girls adopt them as role models, something Baxter, as an animator, finds flattering. But that doesn't mean he related to Belle as a flesh-and-blood creature. "After I had done about half the movie, I knew who she was. It's not like I thought of her as a real person, but I knew what was right for her to do in certain situations, and I knew when I drew her badly that it wasn't right. I would think, 'That's not her; that's someone else.' She definitely took on some aspects of being a real person, but I never actually thought of her as someone real."

Baxter is generous in sharing credit with the other *Beauty & the Beast* artists for Belle's final look. "I only did half the work, really; I would even say I did *less* than half the work, since everything was in place before I stepped in. The others started from scratch—the directors, the story people, the people who played around with her character design, the actors. They started from a clean slate, then I came along and had all that to work with. So, I think mine was the easier assignment; I put the finishing visual touches on it."

The artist and his cohorts made a conscious effort to give Belle a look different from that of Ariel. Thus, Belle is dark-haired and taller, with pudgier cheeks, fuller lips and smaller, almond-shaped eyes with upturned ends. "Ariel had 'window' eyes, with square bottoms, and you didn't see much of her lashes at all," Baxter points out. Belle's coloring, too, is softer: Her eyes are hazel, her lids a softer color than those of Ariel. "Ariel was brasher in colorization—but then, the whole movie was, so it fit," continues Baxter. "The bottom line is, we tried to make Belle more European, with heavier eyebrows. She's more realistic than Ariel."

While *Beauty & the Beast* presented numerous challenges for Baxter, two sequences in particular proved especially so. One was the ballroom sequence where Belle dances with the Beast. "It was a computerized ballroom, meaning the entire ballroom was built in the computer by the guys in the CGI [computer-generated imagery] department. The computerized 'camera' flies around this space where Belle and the Beast have to dance and fit convincingly onto the floor. It's very much a *Roger Rabbit* kind of a technique, except we're now using a computer instead of live action.

"I had to, first of all, learn how to do the dance, then make sure I did it properly in perspective, and then worry about the details, like Belle's dress swirling around. That wasn't tremendously problematic, but it was very labor-intensive. I had to be precise in my planning because I was locked into these camera moves. I worked on that sequence for maybe six weeks, and it's only less than a minute's worth of stuff on screen."

Adding to the nightmare was the

(continued on page 44)

James Baxter, who had worked on previous Disney heroines Jessica Rabbit and Ariel, shared the duties of Key Animation Supervisor on Belle with Mark Henn.

Photos: Robert Fechberg

...AND HUNT WITH ANGER

Andreas Deja adds arrogance to beastly Gaston.

By DAVID HUTCHISON

He may look like a prince, but he acts like a beast. For animation director Andreas Deja, Gaston the hunter in *Beauty & the Beast* was not only the story's most interesting character, but its most surprising as well.

"The first time you see Gaston," begins Deja, "he appears to be an ordinary handsome prince, described by the local girls as dreamy and cute. But from the first he has his sights set on Belle. After all, why wouldn't the most gorgeous girl in town want to marry the most gorgeous guy in town? Or, so Gaston thinks:"

"Belle, it's about time you got your head out of those books and paid attention to more important things, like me," proclaims Gaston.

Then, shortly, you discover that he's a self-centered jerk as well," Deja continues, "with lines like:

"It's not right for a woman to read. She starts getting ideas, and thinking..."

"Gaston, you are positively primeval," replies Belle, dismissing him.

It is easy for the audience, too, to dismiss Gaston as a loud and boorish lout despite his rugged good looks. The surprise of the character appears late in the film, when Gaston is revealed as much more than a stupid brute with an overdose of vanity; he is also a killer. His arrogance drives him to murder, and he becomes the tale's true villain. The impact of this revelation is a real surprise, since up to this moment *Beauty & the Beast* has been a story without an obvious bad guy. The Beast doesn't really qualify as a villain, since he comes across more as an impudent boy with very bad table manners throughout most of the film.

Deja's early character designs portrayed Gaston as very rugged, with a mustache and a pronounced jaw. "My group of animators was very excited

"He's just so damned pleased with himself," says Deja. "Los Angeles is full of good-looking guys who just adore themselves. It was fun to observe them and bring some of that attitude to Gaston."

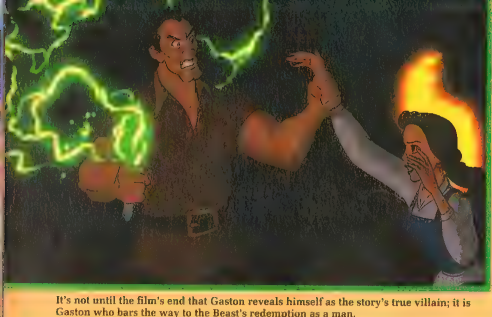
"I tried to retain the whole range of expressions—the sarcasm, the broadness and the extravagance—that one would leading man seldom gets to show," says Deja of Gaston, the handsome villain.

with the Gaston scenes, since he had great lines, an attitude problem and a lot of dynamic action that called for some "juicy" animation. The whole studio wanted to work on Gaston. But, then, [Disney exec] Jeffrey Katzenberg called me into his office and showed me the character designs.

"Look," said Katzenberg, holding up one of the designs, "he's not really handsome here."

"Oh, he's got to be handsome, too." He went back and forth on the issue until he finally called me back into his office and told me what he, Katzenberg, was the movie's main problem.

"Look, it's not really about Beauty and the Beast," Katzenberg explained to Deja. "The theme is: Don't judge a book by its cover. That's what it's really telling in the story—that he's a dragon between two options. You have the Beast, who is ugly but has a heart of gold, and you have Gaston, who is handsome but a real jerk."



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It's not until the film's end that Gaston reveals himself as the story's true villain; it is Gaston who bars the way to the Beast's redemption as a man.

"So I said to Katzenberg, 'I guess that has to be clear graphically, too?' 'Yep!' 'But it's going to be *so* difficult—a prince who's supposed to *act*.'

"It would have been very tempting to go overboard at first. You know: Let's do Arnold! Pump up the muscles and get very cartoony with it. You can do some really fun drawings with that, but it just wasn't right for the overall situation. He wants to marry Belle, and so if you put them next to each other, they should still be in the *same* world. I mean, he can't be a cartoon character, if she's a real human. In theory, they should be able to be bride and groom, so he had to be in her world."

The problem of cartoon-like characters and human characters inhabiting the same world is an issue that Disney animators have always faced. "It's very interesting to look at that problem in previous films," Deja remarks. "Look at *Cinderella*, for example. I don't think that Cinderella and Lucifer the cat belong in the same world. I'm sorry, I don't. I think Cinderella is handled beautifully, and I think Ward Kimball did outstanding stuff with the cat, but when she picks Lucifer up, it's like he's a character from a cartoon short and she comes from a realistic feature film. Comic relief characters are usually the ones pushed into caricature the most.

"And the other problem is giving the characters real dimension and solidity. Bill Tytla's work [in *Pinocchio*, *Fantasia* and other early Disney films] had a very sculpted look. It was always very honest, with no fancy tricks with poses or elegant lines to show off his drawing style. Everything was sculpted. His drawings had real volume and real weight without any showy drawing technique. My personal reaction to some of our earlier work—myself and the younger animators—was that I didn't really like its flatness. When it was on the screen, I would always criticize the flatness of the work: 'Man, this is so flat, like a piece of paper. Who can get involved in these characters if it just looks so flat?' "

Artists with a traditional background in drawing still life might think that the flatness results from the lack of tone, shadow and highlight, but Deja insists that it's in the drawing. "It starts with the animator, and then of course, it follows into clean-up. It's all in the drawing. I really resent flat work, unless it's consciously flat, like *101 Dalmatians*. I really wanted Gaston to be a dimensional character—somebody who walks towards you and you can *feel* him coming at you. Where the foreshortening really works—the hand comes at you and you see the body has depth. You should feel that you can just reach out and grab it.

"So, I tried to design a character who's very expressive; a character with a whole range of expressions—lots of subtle things to bring his attitudes across. And who is also handsome, which means we had to be supercareful with the drawing.

"Very, very careful!" he emphasizes. "If you just let your hand go, and let your animation mind wander, you come up with some pretty good animation, but the character will no longer be handsome. And like Jeffrey was saying; 'All the girls in town love him. He's the town hunk.' So, I had a hard time keeping everybody else on the crew from being intimidated by the drawing. Just work on the animation, I told them, and the attitudes, and then we'll worry about the drawing later."

It has been the custom at Disney since the early '30s to film live-action studies of performers—both human and animal—for the artists to use as visual reference. Such studies help the artists analyze how a character moves in three-dimensional space and add greatly to the sense of reality on the screen. Deja emphasizes, however, that such filmed studies aren't used as a crutch and that he doesn't trace photostats of staged action.

"I just looked at the shots on video and made notes. I did not use any photostats. None!" he insists. "Sometimes I would see some bit or piece of action that the human performer did that wasn't working, but immediately you can see how it *should* be staged. Or, you see something that's exactly right and you use it as a jumping-off spot. For example, when the performer picked up LeFou—I don't know if I would have thought of doing it that way—he yanked LeFou by his neck, threw him up in the air and then grabbed him; it was a very butch way of grabbing the kid. I didn't print anything up, but I

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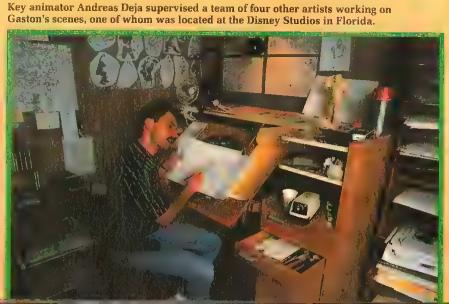
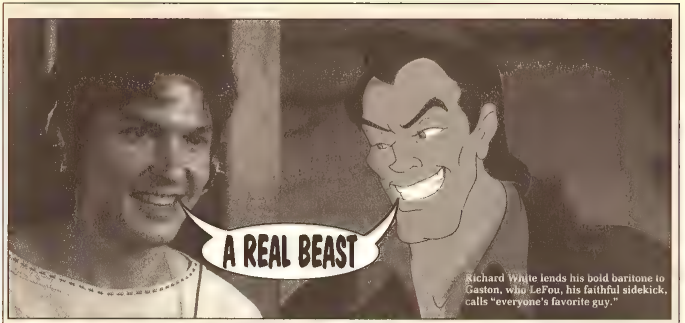
Key animator Andreas Deja supervised a team of four other artists working on Gaston's scenes, one of whom was located at the Disney Studios in Florida.





Richard White lends his bold baritone to Gaston, who LeFou, his faithful sidekick, calls "everyone's favorite guy."

Richard White, who voices the boorish Gaston in Disney's *Beauty & the Beast*, declares his latest cinematic project to be "the most fun I've ever had. They presented us with a script, locked us up in a recording studio, and we commenced to *play*."

Each time the actor entered the studio, the creative team's eyes "would light up, and *my* eyes would light up, and it was like '*OK, boys—here we go!*' With my character, you *could* play, because he gets to be both nasty and charming." Gaston's character offered theater and opera veteran White a cornucopia of line-reading choices because of the villain's duplicity. "He could be as sweet and charming as he could be while he's stabbing you in the back."

Some audience members may be surprised at just how nasty the town bully turns out to be, but White feels that, early in the film, the character's outcome can be foreseen. "The groundwork is laid. I don't think he's completely predictable, but by the same token, he's headed down the wrong path fairly early on. There is some surprise in how things turn out, and that he turns out to be just as awful as he does. But I don't think that's a bad thing at all."

Gaston's character "developed as they heard me, and heard how *I* read things. We tried, for example, to breathe a little more humor into him, a little more charm, which ultimately made for a better bad guy," he says. "They would take that [new character element], it would become a part of their concept for Gaston, and it would be reflected in how they drew him. And *that* would then influence how I would read him the *next* time around. It bounced back and forth a bit."

Over the course of the film's production, the storyboards that depicted Gaston altered "dramatically." Originally, Gaston "had a really heavy beard and was kind of a loutish grunt. Fat, and not particularly good-looking," says White, noting Gaston's he-man, muscle-bound physique in the film's final version.

Gaston enumerates his self-proclaimed Adonis-like virtues in "Gaston," a rollicking tune that places the character's vanity on full display. Of Gaston's shifting nature, White says, "The concept of that scene—from the time we initially did it to how it ended up—changed rather dramatically. The *number* didn't change—not even how we did the *singing* of the number, because that's pretty much expository: '*Here's Gaston, and isn't he terrific, ho ho ho*'—but the *dialogue* in the number.

"At one time, for example, when they were conceiving him in those broad, brutish terms, he sounded kind of different," notes White, lowering his voice to a tone befitting an uncouth lumberjack. "He was all full of puff and huff."

The song itself "was done in New York. The orchestra put it down in one or two takes. We then got it down very quickly. The things that took the most time in that particular situation were the underscored things, where you had dialogue to fit behind a certain amount of music. That gets a little tricky. But it was a pleasure."

Richard White looks forward to *Beauty & the Beast*'s critical and popular reception, adding that his six-year-old daughter has already seen the movie and given it thumbs-up. "It's so exciting. All of us were raised on Disney animated films. When you're a part of something like this, you feel you're a part of a classic. There is, after all, a heck of a tradition there, and the quality that Disney invests in these things is legendary.

"When you actually see what [the animators] have done, and how it works with what you have done, it's very, very exciting. You can't help but be proud of it." —*Lynne Stephens*

The nine supervising animators for *Beauty & the Beast* are, left to right: (back row) Chris Wahl, *LeFou*; Andreas Deja, *Gaston*; Will Finn, *Cogsworth*; Glen Keane, *Beast*; James Baxter, *Belle*; Nik Ranieri, *Lumiere*; (front row) Dave Pruiksma, *Mrs. Potts & Chip*; Russ Edmunds, *Phillipe*; Ruben Aquino, *Maurice*.

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Deja

(continued from page 40)

used the idea. I used the live-action video to fish for good ideas; sometimes the video had it and sometimes it didn't, but it always gave me something to start with, instead of staring at a blank piece of paper."

Deja's career began at Disney with an assignment to design characters for *The Black Cauldron*. He first wrote to the studio as a 10-year-old living in Germany, where he was raised and went to school. "I had just seen *The Jungle Book* and knew that was what I wanted to do. The studio replied with a form letter that told me they were fully staffed and didn't need anyone at the moment, but that they were always on the lookout for outstanding artists. So that was it! I had to be outstanding...at least that's what it said. I had to look up all the words in the dictionary, since I didn't speak English at the time."

Born in Poland, a one-year-old Deja was smuggled with his parents across the border into Germany, where his family finally settled in Dusseldorf. Many years later, after a stint in the army and several years in art school, he wrote to Eric Larson, who was then in charge of the studio's animator training program. Larson liked the drawings that Deja had sent, but advised him to finish school before coming to Disney, which eventually happened in August 1980.

Over the years, Deja has developed a reputation for being one of the studio's finer draughtsmen, and, as a result, was often assigned to draw sensitive close-ups of sympathetic characters.

"I hate to be typecast. It *really* irks me." Deja confesses. "I think you should be able to do anything. So, I've tried to bounce around on many different assignments. I worked on *Roger Rabbit* and then Triton in *Little Mermaid*, which was a bit more serious and dramatic. Then, Mickey Mouse again [in *The Prince and the Pauper*] and Gaston, and now I'm working on Jephar, the bad guy in *Aladdin*, who is really more of a comic villain."

Though a team of animators is usually assigned the scenes for a single character, there are times when Deja and his group found themselves animating other characters besides Gaston. A good example is the climactic fight at the film's end between Gaston and the Beast.

"I talked to [veteran animators] Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston about how they handled the fight sequences in *Peter Pan*, because there was a lot of interaction—they were touching each other all the time. The basic rule is to have the character who's motivating the scene at the beginning determine who animates the scene. So, if you have Gaston kicking the Beast, and the Beast is reacting, you would have the Gaston animators start the scene out, and maybe even block in the Beast—just a shape, so you know how he would react. Then, you give that to the Beast's unit and if they think it's OK, then it might go straight to clean-up. If the Beast kicks Gaston, then the Beast unit starts out and blocks in Gaston flying through the air. So, you have to go back and forth. It's a prime example of teamwork.

"And I, myself, have done quite a few scenes with LeFou—whenever Gaston picks him up, kicks him or yells at him. I always checked with the LeFou animator, and the clean-up was done by the LeFou unit, since they know the character best."

The Little Mermaid worked with many short scenes cut to the music; *Rescuers Down Under* played with longer scenes and was edited much more like a standard action/adventure story. *Beauty & the Beast*, however, plays with very long scenes and looks much more like a traditional staged musical story. As an animator, Deja prefers to work with longer scenes.

"I was always a critic of being too cutty—being too short with scenes, because in my opinion, you lose the emotion of the moment. This is especially true if there's an emotional change in the character and you cut from a close-up to a long shot to a medium shot, rather than having the whole thing play in one shot and have the character go through the changes. Then, you can see it happen. They come to life. I'm always pushing for this. We had a story meeting for *Aladdin*, and I asked for three scenes to be combined into one, so that you could stay on the character and watch him go through the moment. It requires better animation, and better acting, because you have to sustain interest for a longer time."

Richard White, a well-known NY stage singer who voices Gaston, set the tone for the animators when it came time to establish the character.

"When I first heard the voice tracks, I thought, 'My God! He never stops singing.' Even when he talks," Andreas Deja exclaims. "And that became part of Gaston's attitude. You just accept it and make it work for you. It's almost a one-dimensional voice—everything sounds the same, but, see, that's Gaston's personality. He's just so damned pleased with himself. He loves who he is and expects everyone to adore him."

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Baxter

(continued from page 37)

fact that the song ["Beauty and the Beast"] was not in three-quarter time, as is a waltz. "We had two professional ballroom dancers [Mary Anderson and Duane May] come in, and we asked them, 'How do you dance to this song? It's in march time—how do you do a graceful dance to that?' They came up with some good things. We shot a lot of video of them, and I watched it forever."

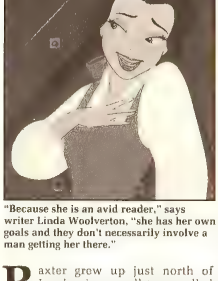
Baxter animated the entire sequence, including the Beast, who otherwise fell under associate Glen Keane's jurisdiction (CS #22). "When you've got two characters who are that close, to the point of actually touching one another, it's almost impossible to split up the workload. I did a lot of sketches of the Beast and showed them to Glen. He would say things like, 'You're drawing his nose wrong,' or whatever correction he wanted to make. I went to him a lot, to make sure I had the Beast drawn right. We went over ideas about how he should dance; he starts off kind of clumsy and looking at his feet, but by the end he's Gene Kelly."

The other prominent challenge was the film's opening sequence; Belle is introduced as she walks to the local bookshop. The sequence presented problems due to "all the different layout levels involved—it had a lot of flat levels of artwork all moving at different speeds, which I had to correspond to." Baxter didn't, however, have to hold the reins when it came time to revamp the "Be Our Guest" number after it was decided the tune should be sung to Belle rather than her father. "I didn't do *any* of that sequence," he laughs. "My good friend Randy Cartwright did all of Belle's animation, because I was overcommitted. When the change came up, it became a question of who was available."

His favorite scene as an artist was the reprise of "Belle," where Belle comes out of her house after throwing her egomaniacal suitor, Gaston, out on his ear. Recounts Baxter, "She storms 'round the back of the house, throwing buckets and kicking at the tables and stuff...she's singing at the time and she runs out into the fields and says she wants adventure in the great wide somewhere, and all of that kind of heroine-type stuff.

"I loved doing the sequence because there was a lot of range in it. She gets real mad in the beginning, and she's very physically active. She gets to run out into the fields and do the *Sound of Music* bit, and then she gets to be very quiet and kind of melancholy. At that sequence's end, the camera moves in real close and I got to draw a nice big close-up."

Commenting on co-directors Wise and Trousdale, Baxter feels they did a "great job of getting up to speed as quickly as they did. I thought they were great as first-time directors. It's such a difficult job. They're story guys, too, which made a real difference; they weren't so bothered with the technical expertise of the animation—they left that up to me. *The Rescuers Down Under* didn't have supervising animators in that capacity; much more responsibility for the actual animation was left up to myself, Glen and Andreas Deja [page 38]."



"Because she is an avid reader," says writer Linda Woolverton, "she has her own goals and they don't necessarily involve a man getting her there."

Baxter grew up just north of London in a small town called Bishop's Stortford. As a lad, he did "all that Dickensian stuff that English boys do," including attending private school. He began drawing at an early age, but it wasn't until he enrolled at a technical college in Cambridge that he realized he could combine his interest in film and art in the form of animated movies. "I never really made the connection that I could do that [animation] until later on—that was something that people had a job doing, making those movies. As a child, I thought it was all kind of magical and came from nowhere."

After a time spent "messing around" at his school's audio-visual department, he became an animation major at the West Surrey College of Art and Design, located south of London. "I didn't like it very much," he admits, so he left after a year to work on Disney's *Roger Rabbit*, which was already underway in London.

He joined the film as Andreas Deja's assistant, eventually working up to in-betweener and getting "bumped up" to animator by the project's end. While in the States to attend the film's premiere, he met with Disney Senior VP of Feature Animation, Peter Schneider, who offered him a three-year contract. He came in "two-thirds of the way" through *The Little Mermaid*, where he worked as a character animator, then spent a year on *The Rescuers Down Under*, animating a "grab bag of everything, from cockroaches to albatrosses."

Baxter chose not to renew his contract with the studio. "I wanted a break," he confesses, smiling. "I'm going to work on some TV commercials in London with Passion Pictures, just as a chance to do some [short-form] projects and try experimenting with some different animation styles. I've only worked at Disney—my first job was on a Disney movie, after all. The good thing about experimentation is, if one experiment doesn't work, you can try another one."

The move away from Disney is not necessarily a permanent one, he says. "It's always an option, my coming back—I don't intend to burn any bridges. Peter Schneider thinks it's sometimes wise for people to go away for a while and grow a bit and then come back with what they've learned. Otherwise, you stagnate. Working here is great, because you get to do high-quality features. But it can be stagnating to your stylistic growth."

As for the resemblance between Belle and his wife-to-be, Patty [they met on *The Rescuers Down Under*], Baxter smiles when he says that "I guess, subconsciously, I did lean towards Patty [when animating Belle] because hers is the face that I know best. She didn't exactly pose for me or anything, but there was a definite subconscious thing going on when I sat down to work on Belle." Patty herself found the comparisons to Belle "hilarious, because the majority of the design work on Belle was done before I came on—it just coincidentally fit her facial structure. Still, people on the movie were always telling her how much she looked like Belle."

James Baxter sums up his experience on *Beauty & the Beast* as "many satisfying artistic moments coupled with a lot of stress in terms of time and the stress that comes with having to deal with other people in an artistic situation. I got sick for two weeks in the middle of the film and had to miss out on a sequence I really wanted to do—where Belle and the Beast first meet. I had to give it to Mark Henn, who did his work in Florida.

"As far as my animation, I think I did the best work I've ever done. I hope it stands up to what has been done around here for the past 50, 60 years. That's really all I can hope for."

A Wee Bit of Punishment

By HANK KANALZ

There's blood on the moors when the Punisher hits the Highlands.

All Blood Art: Cam Kennedy

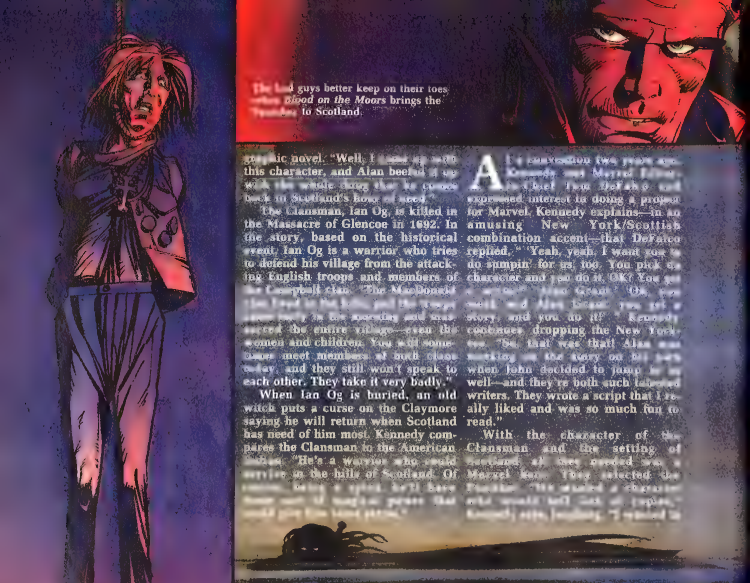
If all the violence in the world took place on the screen and in comic books, the world would be a better place in which to live," says Cam Kennedy with an engaging Scottish accent. He's doing his part by painting a new *Punisher* graphic novel for Marvel called *Blood on the Moors*. No stranger to battle-style comics, Kennedy is well-known for his work on Epic's *Light and Darkness War*, DC's *Outcasts*, and Fleetway's *Judge Dredd* and *Rogue Trooper*.

The Scottish native and resident has a familiar story to tell of his childhood with comics. Although American comics were a little harder to get, Kennedy remembers an abundance of Dell comics. "Mostly *Tom and Jerry* and *Bugs Bunny*, but I wasn't all that interested in them. What I really enjoyed collecting was Joe Kubert's stuff—his war comics, *Sgt. Rock*. I had a pretty good collection, too, but when I left home, my mother gave them to some little Boy Scout at the door for a jumbo sale." He attributes his "chunkiness and gritty drawing" to the early influence of Kubert's work.

Unlike many artists, Kennedy didn't really set out to draw comics. "I knew I would have to end up in the art world somewhere," he explains. For several years, he was involved in commercial art, working in a Glasgow studio as an apprentice. "It's the best training...it's not as easy to get an apprenticeship these days."

Kennedy also spent six years in France focusing on painting. While there, he had several exhibitions of his work and ran a commercial-art studio with a friend. Upon his return to Scotland in 1978, another friend suggested that he get into comics. "I drew up some sketches and sent them down to a company in London—IPC Magazines as they were called at the time—and I got a script by return post. And that was it! I did a lot of work for them." Kennedy toiled on *Battle* and then moved on to *2000 A.D.*, where he contributed to *The VC's*, *Judge Dredd* and *Rogue Trooper*.

While working for IPC, Kennedy met writers Alan Grant and John Wagner, with whom he teamed to produce *Outcasts* for DC in 1988. These fellow Scots also make up the creative team of *Blood on the Moors*. Kennedy recalls, "I had been talking to Alan about writing a story, and he offered to help me out. Later on, when we were talking again, he asked if I had any ideas for that story, and I said no. But I did have an idea for a character called the Clansman. Now, they may change the name of the character in America because it has different connotations, but anyway, he's a six-and-a-half-foot man who uses a six-foot Claymore [broadsword]." The Clansman is a spirit involved in an Arthurian-esque legend who aids the Punisher in the



graphic novel. "Well, I came up with this character, and Alan beefed it up with the whole thing that he comes back in Scotland's hour of need."

The Clansman, Ian Og, is killed in the Massacre of Glencoe in 1692. In the story, based on the historical event, Ian Og is a warrior who tries to defend his village from the attacking English troops and members of the Campbell clan. "The MacDonald clan lived in the hills, and the troops came down in the morning and massacred the entire village—even the women and children. You will sometimes meet members of both clans today, and they still won't speak to each other. They take it very badly."

When Ian Og is buried, an old witch puts a curse on the Claymore saying he will return when Scotland has need of him most. Kennedy compares the Clansman to the American Indian. "He's a warrior who could survive in the hills of Scotland. Of course, he'll have some sort of magical power that could give him some power."

At a convention two years ago, Kennedy met Marvel Editor-in-Chief Tom DeFalco and expressed interest in doing a project for Marvel. Kennedy explains—in an amusing New York/Scottish combination accent—that DeFalco replied, "Yeah, yeah. I want you to do sumpin' for us. We You pick a character and you do it. OK? You get a story, and you do it." Kennedy continues dropping the New York-ese. "So, that was that! Alan was working on the story on his own when John decided to jump in as well—and they're both such talented writers. They wrote a script that I really liked and was so much fun to read."

With the character of the Clansman and the setting of Scotland all [illegible] Marvel Icon. They selected the Frankenstein "The undead Scottish monster would tell tales of regret," Kennedy says, laughing. "I wanted to

Artist Cam Kennedy credits Scotland for

Tracking down drug dealers to a whiskey distillery, Frank Castle learns of alcohol's damaging effects the hard way.

Kennedy hopes the Clansman will spark interest on American shores.

All Punisher/Blood Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1991 Marvel Entertainment Group

wanted to do something well-known—a well-established American comic book character. I didn't want to do a character with yellow flashes and bells on his toes or anything, you know. I had drawn a lot of *Dredd* and *Rogue Trooper*, all those gritty characters, so I thought that either Frank Castle or Nick Fury would be good choices for me." Grant and Kennedy had done a story in which Fury goes to the Isles looking for a terrorist base, so that left the Punisher.

Kennedy believes that this Punisher story is set apart from the others because Frank Castle is out of his element. "Frank is in a part of Europe where no one thought he would ever go. We're talking about this well built American guy who walks the streets of New York, and he's put in the middle of Edinburgh." Although the character may be out of place, Kennedy says he tries to blend Castle with the different locale. "Jim Lee, who can do beautiful Punisher work, can really beef him up. I've tried not to do that so much so he wouldn't look too much out of place in the glens. He's not dropped into sewers. He's fighting for his life in the snow in the Scotland hills!" Kennedy also takes pride in blending realistic machinery with the human factor, creating a believable union.

The Punisher is in Scotland tracking drug dealers when he gets into trouble at a whiskey distillery. He's left for dead, and, as per the legend, the Clansman comes to help him. Kennedy hopes that the showcase of the new character will spark reader interest.

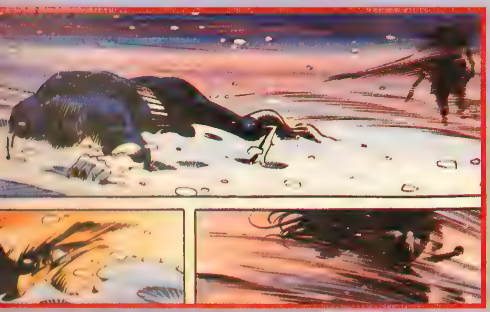
"Alan and John have many ideas for the character. I hope fans like him so we can bring him back. Or they can say to bring Frank back to the States! American readers should have a good interest in this book, especially those who like [the movie] *Highlander*."

Through the Clansman's popularity and future remain a mystery for now, those of the Punisher do not. Kennedy believes that part of the hero's popularity lies in the need for people to see justice done. "Everyone knows someone who knows someone involved with drugs. Here, you can see the bad guys get their asses kicked. In the Punisher's case, it's with *extreme prejudice*!

"I look at Frank Castle as someone who's really pissed off that someone killed his family. I'm a family man, and I think that Castle feels justified. There are so many people who say, 'Come on, Frank! Get them!' "

Readers should take note that there *is* a connection between this Scotland story and the Spider-Man in Scotland graphic novel *Spirits of the Earth* by Charles Vess (CS #15)—but it has nothing to do with the storyline. Vess is a "great Scotland buff" and has been to Scotland numerous times. Two years ago, Vess and his wife swapped houses with Kennedy and his wife. While Vess stayed on the Orkney Isles, Kennedy lived in Vess' house in New York. Other than that,

(continued on page 66)



The Clansman appears during Scotland's—and Castle's—greatest hour of need.

The Addams Chronicles

Caroline Thompson & Larry Wilson keep examining comic book lives.

Mai Art: Copyright 1991 Viz Comics

Addams Art: By & Copyright 1990 Charles Addams

Beetlejuice Art: Nelvana

By **ROBERT PEGG**

Individually, they have created some of the most hauntingly beautiful and bizarre fantasy images to hit the screen in years. Caroline Thompson wrote Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands* and Larry Wilson co-scripted Burton's *Beetlejuice*. Now, they've teamed up, and future projects include film adaptations of the comic books *Concrete* and *Mai, the Psychic Girl*, and a movie where Peter Pan-like pop star Michael Jackson plays (honest!) a crime-fighting superhero.

In short, they're kind of the dynamic duo of screenwriters. And it all began with *The Addams Family*.

"The story is about how Fester became an Addams," says the 35-year-old Thompson of the script which marked her first collaboration with Wilson. The film isn't derived so much from the 1964 ABC sitcom as the TV show's source, Charles Addams' classic cartoons. Thompson and Wilson claim Addams' body of work in the *New Yorker* magazine as their prime inspiration for the Barry Sonnenfeld-directed *Addams Family* film (CS #23).

Concrete Art: By & Copyright 1991 Paul H. Chadwick

"Instead of relying completely on the TV sitcom, one thing that we decided with producer Scott Rudin very early on was that we were going to dip into the original Charles Addams cartoons as our source material," recalls the 41-year-old Wilson.

Addams had two different styles of drawings. His cartoons featuring the Addams Family were ghoulish, black humor, literally a twisted view of Norman Rockwell's world. A typical example is one in which Morticia and Gomez beam with parental pride and say, "The little dears, they still believe in Santa Claus!" as they watch

All Addams Family Photos: Melinda Sue Gordon/Copyright 1991 Paramount Pictures

***Addams Family* writers Caroline Thompson and Larry Wilson wanted the film to touch upon family themes, such as Fester's (Christopher Lloyd) return.**

their children going through their Christmas Eve preparations of fanning the flames and heaping more logs into the fireplace in anticipation of Santa's arrival.

His non-Addams Family cartoons were witty and surreal. He was the Gary (*Far Side*) Larson of his day.

"We borrowed images from both sides of his work—the ghoulish stuff and also the free-wheeling surrealistic humor in non-Addams Family cartoons, something I feel in tune with," Wilson says. "I think there's a lot of that in *Beetlejuice*.

"But in his Addams Family cartoons, in a funny way, the obvious level is that it's all reverse, a mirror vision of Norman Rockwell. But, of all the things we wanted to say in the film, *if* the film says anything, it's that the Addams Family—for all their weirdness—is the best family in town. They are truly bonded and truly care for each other."

Thompson agrees: "For Morticia, the concept of family is as important as that same concept in *any* Norman Rockwell image.

"I wanted them to keep their integrity. I don't think the point of the family is to laugh at them. To me, the Addams Family itself, especially since Charles Addams named it after himself, is like—imagine New York WASP aristocracy *decaying*. I was told that he was an extremely shy, self-effacing guy and not very good company. Apparently, he collected antique guns, medieval cross-bows and suits of armor. So, he sounds *exactly* like the kind of guy who would create these cartoons. They were *his*! They were *him*!"

"He's very skilled at plot and coming up with this very *out-there* imagery," Thompson notes about Wilson.

Wilson Photo: Courtesy Larry Wilson

Both writers knew they also had to look at the *other* Addams family for inspiration—the ones who, as their TV theme song says, are "creepy and kooky, mysterious and spooky, altogether ooky."

"We watched a number of episodes from the '60s TV show, mainly to get a feel," says Wilson. "There were some real touchstones that we had to use—obviously because the vast majority of the movie's audience will be familiar with the TV show, not the original cartoons."

Says Thompson, "We watched those shows with great pleasure. In our script, there are things from the TV show, like the cuckoo-clock that roars, the bear rug that growls when someone walks on it! We've liberated Thing and released him from his box.

"Jackie Coogan was wonderful as Fester, but we really loved what John Astin did with Gomez. So, we made our Gomez, played by Raul Julia, be that way—exuberant, always lively and spirited. Yet he could be as despondent as he could be high; he's kind of manic-depressive."

Wilson adds, "Each of the movie's characters are drawn a shade differently from the TV characters, but in many ways, John Astin's voice was *so* right and *so* distinct, that in writing the script, it was the one voice that we mimicked.

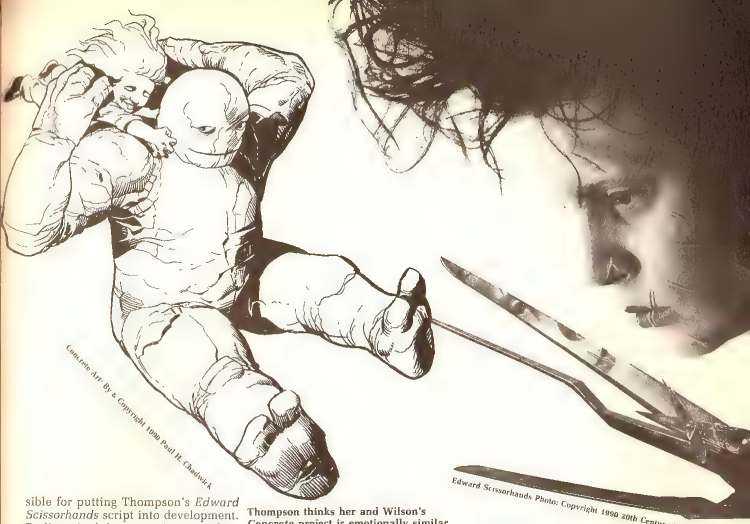
"But in watching the old episodes, we also realized that although some of it is really wonderful and well-imagined, it's also *plotless*. It's the set-up and the pay-off, but not much more. That wasn't something we could get away with in a feature film.

"One problem was that so much of Morticia and Gomez's response to things was that reverse-image thing—bad is good, black is white—and it was hard to find areas that they could relate to in an emotional way.

"So, the thing that we focused on was that if there was a threat to the family and family harmony, then they would react the way *we* react, and when he keyed in on that, we were able to develop a story about the impostor Fester and hit upon these themes of family and all that we wanted to touch upon."

Although the writers only worked with director Sonnenfeld in the early development stage, they were closely involved with producer Scott Rudin and credit him for their team-up.

As the former president of 20th Century Fox, Rudin had been respon-



Thompson thinks her and Wilson's *Concrete* project is emotionally similar to *Edward Scissorhands*, which she scripted. "It will appeal to people who find that their emotions are also buried in concrete."

sible for putting Thompson's *Edward Scissorhands* script into development. Rudin paired the two writers together, initially just for *The Addams Family*.

"I don't quite know what Scott's thinking was, but I do know he felt that comedy is better written by *two* people," remembers Thompson. "Scott asked me to bear with him and meet this other person to see how we would get along. God knows why I said yes, because it isn't like me at all, but we met. Larry's *really* strange and has this wonderful imagination. I enjoyed him so much that I said yes."

The writers used Charles Addams' cartoons as their source material for the film, but kept Raul Julia's Gomez similar to John Astin's TV incarnation.

Wilson's memories are slightly different. "I had known Scott for seven or eight years, and he knew that I was very interested in writing *The Addams Family*, but he thought it was the kind of project that could use two voices or two sensibilities.

"Still, when Scott sprung this on us, I think both of us were pretty resentful at first. You know, as in, 'Well, doesn't he think *I* can do it on my own?' So, Caroline and I met at Scott's behest. Caroline claims she didn't like me much at first, and I don't think she *did*, actually.

"But we developed an ability to talk about *The Addams Family*, and that developed into working on the script together, then a really terrific friendship and great partnership. Now, we're doing projects alone and together. I just feel that we'll be work-

Thompson Photo: Zade Rosenthal/Copyright 1990 20th Century Fox

"Temperamentally and artistically, she thinks out a character," says Wilson of Thompson's writing strengths.

"A threat to the family and family harmony" was the only way Wilson and Thompson could make the Addamses react like normal people.

ing together in some capacity for a *long* time to come."

Thompson says they balance out each other's strengths and weaknesses. "My strengths tend to be in the fantasy context, making something feel real, making it plausible and that can be scene by scene or moment by moment. And Larry's strength is that he's very skilled at plot and coming up with this very *out-there* imagery. He has a real bizarre brain in him, unlike any I've ever been around before."

Wilson elaborates, "Caroline began as a novelist and I think that temperamentally and artistically, she thinks out a character. That's where things develop for her; it's coming out of character and emotion. Whereas for me, a plot idea, a turn-on, a joke, a visual image will be the starting point.

"Working on *The Addams Family* was really terrific because Caroline was able to find her way into these characters, who might have remained TV sitcom caricatures, in a way that was really special.

"Putting the two of us together was an astute call on Scott's part. He was absolutely right in terms of the sensibilities and complementary voices in our work."

Of their future projects, Thompson credits Wilson for being the instigator behind the comic book adaptations of *Concrete* and *Mai, the Psychic Girl*. "Larry is really hooked into that world."

Mai, to be directed by Tim Burton, is the most likely to hit the screen first. However, since Burton is currently tied up with *Batman Returns*, neither writer will attempt to guess when *Mai* will go into production.

Wilson says the *Mai* project, a musical, was born out of his association with the pop band, Sparks: "Ron and Russel Mael, who *are* Sparks, have been longtime friends of mine. We had been looking for an approach to a movie musical which would be ground-breaking in the way it utilized music in a film.

"Then, I discovered the *Mai, the Psychic Girl* comic book and fell in love with it. Japanese comics are tremendously visual, they're not really that text-oriented. There's something about the art in *Mai* and how it floats from panel to panel that felt spacious and musical to me. I took the comics to the Maels, and they got excited about doing something in a musical context within a film.

"I had worked with the director Walter Hill in the past. He helped us get a deal at Carolco to have the music recorded and a script developed.

"It departs from the standard, old-fashioned movie musical in that—except on about three very deliberate occasions—it's not a 'break-into-song' musical. The music is often environmental—sounds *within* a soundtrack will synthesize into a musical track. The singing and lyrics are often cyclical, fragmented dialogue which will go into song.

"What the Maels have come up with for this is extraordinary and cutting-edge in terms of movie musicals. I describe it as Stephen Sondheim meets Laurie Anderson meets The Who's *Tommy*.

"Since Tim Burton has committed to the project, Caroline and I have turned in a fresh draft of the screenplay. There's a new path and music that reflects the changes."

He adds that it won't be like the *Batman* soundtrack, in which Prince's songs were imposed on Danny Elfman's score. "The Maels will be composing *all* the music. But it's not really Sparks-like music. It's a big departure for them. Everything is integrated and designed deliberately for the script and music to go together in a way where you *couldn't* have another composer come in and contribute to it. It all has to click."

Another familiar name connected with Burton's movies who will likely be missing from the credits is Winona Ryder. True, she looks *exactly* like Mai, but she's a bit old to pull off playing a budding pubescent. Thompson says they want the character to remain a 13-year-old. "The theme is that she's on the cusp of puberty—that's when all her powers explode, and that's the perfect metaphor for Mai."

Like *Mai, the Psychic Girl*, *Concrete* became a project because Wilson was a fan. "It's the *best* thing out in the comics world right now," he says. Unlike *Mai*, *Concrete* won't be a musical.

Wilson will make his directorial debut on *Concrete*, which the team is writing with the book's creator, Paul Chadwick. Thompson describes the Concrete character as a large part of

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Michael Keaton's role in *Beetlejuice* "was 90 percent improvised," Wilson reveals.

All Beetlejuice Art & Characters Copyright 1987 The Geffen Film Company

FEELING PARANOIA

He isn't crazy about this eternal struggle, but he just keeps dying.

All Paranoia Art: Kipper Courtesy Malibu Graphics

By DREW BITTNER

I imagine living in a world where everything is ruled by the whim of a demented Artificial Intelligence. This Computer sends you on suicide missions that you cannot possibly survive, so you get killed –time and again. Success is virtually impossible, and you're always guilty of a crime. Don't protest. You were sent on this mission by the Computer, and the Computer is *never* wrong.

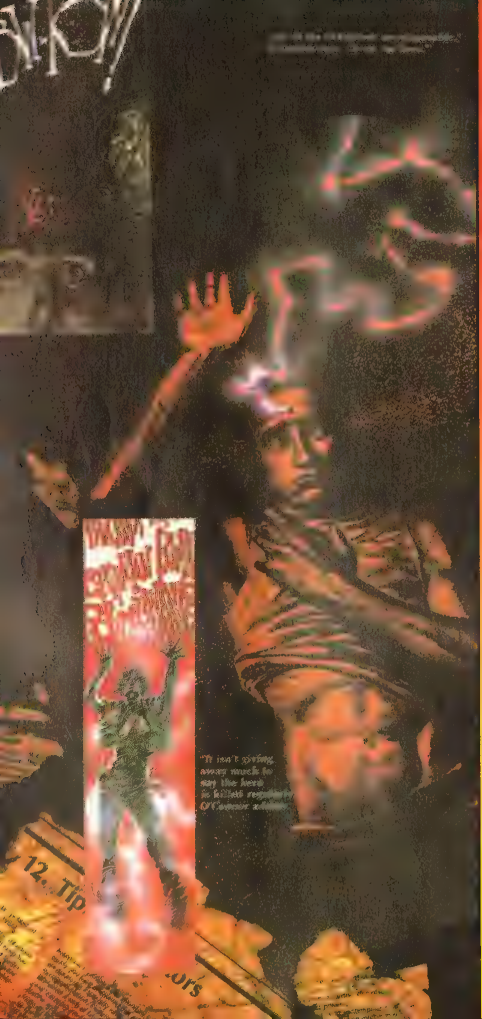
This nightmare is the premise of the darkly humorous role-playing game *Paranoia* from West End Games. Its popularity has spurred Eternity Comics to execute a six-issue mini-series written by Paul O'Connor with art by Kipper and Hector.

O'Connor's series follows a clone, King-R-Thr, in his quest for self-understanding, a mission frustrated by his frequent deaths. For O'Connor, the story was a challenge from the first.

"The biggest hurdle was the lethality of environment," O'Connor explains. "In the game, the heroes are knocked off all the time, only to get replaced by the next member of their clone family. If one character gets fried, you just plug the next one in. I didn't want to sand off the edges of the *Paranoia* universe, but I had to have a method of continuity for the hero—some way for him to grow and develop as the series progresses.

"In *Paranoia*, all of the characters are disposable, even the hero," O'Connor notes. "What makes him different is that his mutant power allows him to tap into memories of his past lives. He can 'flash back' to prior lives and glean information from them. Sometimes it's useful and sometimes it's trivial, but King-R-Thr

Paranoia Comic Character Art © Malibu Graphics Publishing Group Inc. All rights reserved.



keeps learning more and more through these past lives. All of this is crucial to the story, because the power is really King's reason for being there in the first place."

The idea for a "racial memory" mutant ability came to him while he was working on *Ex-Mutants* a few years ago.

"I had this idea, back in 1988 or '89, of a group of clones developed to re-populate the world after a devastating holocaust," he says. "I got into the idea of a clone family and the idea of race-memory being their way of learning, but the idea wouldn't support a series by itself. But when I got *Paranoia* to work on, it clicked and everything fell into place."

King-R-Thr's story also involves a handful of allies, a conspiracy aimed at overthrowing the Computer and establishing a better life for the repressed clones. The mechanism for doing this rests with King-R-Thr's racial-memory power.

"His mutant powers are the result of selective breeding by a mysterious agency," explains O'Connor. "King-R-Thr is the dagger that this group aimed at the Computer. Even if the Computer kills King when he gets too smart or learns too much, he'll remember those secrets in this next incarnation. He can get around the mass ignorance imposed by the Computer, and he learns that information is the key to controlling the population. The only way to impart knowledge, with the Computer running all of the media, is through the oral tradition of storytelling, and King is the only clone in Alpha who can sustain that tradition. In creating King, this secret society hopes they have made a super-clone whose knowledge is inborn, someone who can biologically challenge the Computer's rule. Of course, at the beginning, King is completely unaware of this; he's just another grunt in this society, and all he really wants is safety, comfort and companionship like everyone else."

Because this world is *Paranoia*, however, safety and comfort are hard to come by. Death is more than an everyday occurrence—it happens with alarming frequency, especially to the heroes.

"It's no accident that this is a six-issue limited series," O'Connor admits. "Each issue corresponds to a different member of King-R-Thr's clone family, numbers one through six, who are six different versions of the same guy. It isn't giving away much to say that the hero is killed regularly."

For O'Connor, the character, not the setting, builds the story. "I come from the 'character first' school of comics writing," he says. "If you cre-

...e a fully defined character with good, strong motivations, then just by existing, he'll generate a story. My tories are character-generated."

Having only six issues to tell King-R-Thr's story, from "birth" to self-awareness, requires a lean storytelling style. O'Connor says that, where his ongoing series have used "subplots galore," *Paranoia* is different.

"On something like *Ex-Mutants*, I would try to open one subplot, develop one and close one each per issue. But, in a six-issue series, although you have plenty of room to tell a story, it's plotted too tightly for superfluous elements."

As to Arthurian references, O'Connor says that King's name picks up the Arthurian belief that a king will come in the time of his people's greatest need and deliver them from danger. King also has a protector and best friend named Lance-R-Lot.

"His girl friend, Ala, is a member of the Earth Mothers, who don't believe in clone banks so there's a possibility of a Modred coming along," he admits. "The nomenclature is there, but the Arthurian angle is peripheral to the series."

O'Connor adds that King's relationship with Ala is "odd. Their families share this history, where they continually meet, fall in love and are killed, over and over.

"The story we're telling isn't traditional for regular *Paranoia* adventuring," he observes. "In an ordinary role-playing game module or adventure, the characters solve the problem or they die, but usually they do both. I didn't use that. Sure, King becomes a troubleshooter briefly and gets pushed into danger by the Computer, but the story concentrates on his awakening rather than fighting the Computer's imaginary dangers.

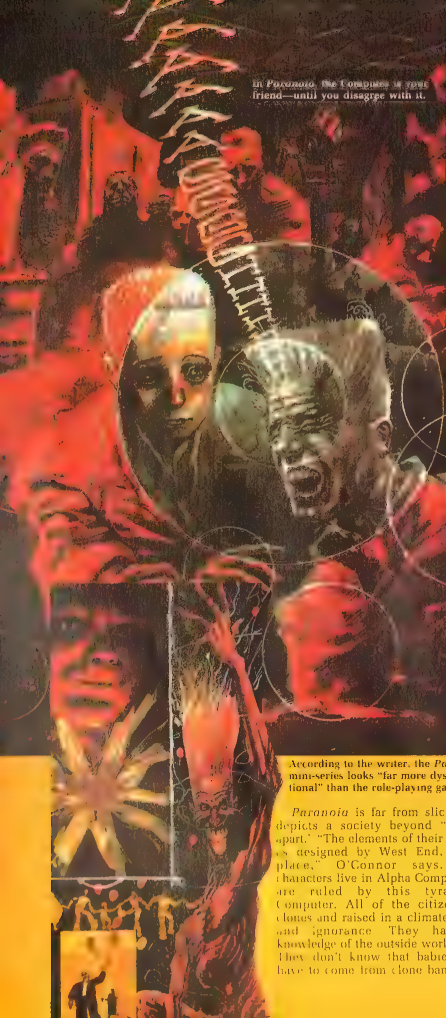
"This series *isn't* an adaptation of the game, even though the background is based on the game," O'Connor says. "It's a different approach than the one West End has taken. I found there were some [artistic] elements that didn't sit well with me. The *Paranoia* universe sounds highly dysfunctional—nothing works right! But all of West End's artwork for the game looks like something out of *Logan's Run*; very sterile and clean. That was all wrong to me. I couldn't see that as a logical outcome of all that was happening there.

"In our series, the look is very different. It's obviously far more dysfunctional. There are signs of battle damage all over, laser holes in the walls—the place is a mess. The book's whole appearance is more postmodern than some slick SF future."

"Paranoia's look, notes O'Connor, "is more post-modern than a slick SF future."

In *Paranoia*, the Computer is your friend—until you disagree with it.

All King-R-Thr wants is "safety, comfort and companionship, like everyone else," reveals *Paranoia* writer Paul O'Connor.



According to the writer, the *Paranoia* mini-series looks "far more dysfunctional" than the role-playing game.

Paranoia is far from slick, as it depicts a society beyond "falling-apart." "The elements of their society, as designed by West End, are in place," O'Connor says. "The characters live in Alpha Complex and are ruled by this tyrannical Computer. All of the citizens are clones and raised in a climate of fear and ignorance. They have no knowledge of the outside world at all. They don't know that babies don't have to come from clone banks, and that the Computer need not rule every aspect of their lives."

West End Games helped O'Connor and Eternity a great deal with translating *Paranoia* to the comics page.

"They approved everything, even after I made it clear I *wasn't* going to regurgitate game material. At first, they were a little hesitant, which is understandable. They have a product to protect and a comic to promote, but they didn't have comics expertise. In the long run, they adopted our vision. In fact, the latest Paranoia project's cover art is a panel from *Paranoia* #1."

O'Connor describes himself as "a real comics outsider. I read them for years, but made the decision to stop when I started writing them. I haven't read a comic in six or seven years. Like most people, when something is your job, it's hard to relax with it in your free time. Besides that, I want to keep my own work fresh, and not feel like it's getting in-bred by everything else on the stands.

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THE FOUR PHASES OF "THE TERMINATOR"

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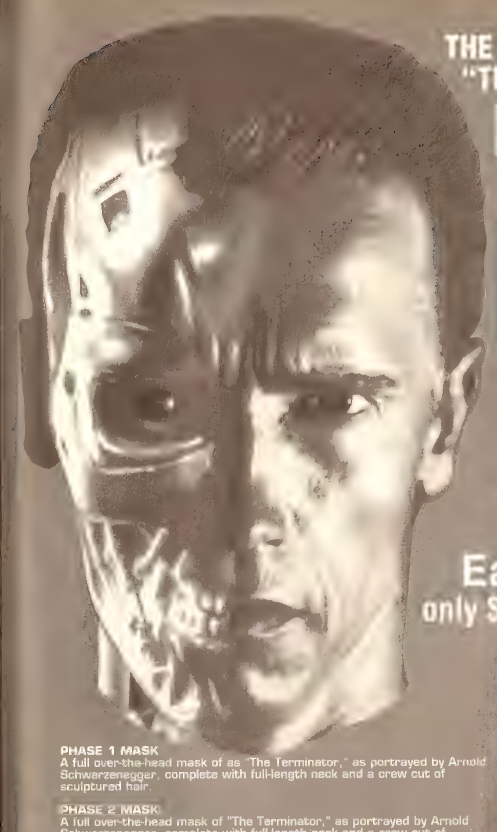

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PHASE 2 MASK
A full over-the-head mask of "The Terminator," as portrayed by Arnold Schwarzenegger, complete with full-length neck and a crew cut of sculptured hair. But there are tears in the skin, revealing the silver endoskeleton underneath!

PHASE 3 MASK
A full over-the-head mask of "The Terminator," as portrayed by Arnold Schwarzenegger, complete with full-length neck and a crew cut of sculptured hair. But this mask shows half of Schwarzenegger's face and half of the endoskeleton!

PHASE 4 MASK
A full over-the-head mask of the endoskeleton—head and neck!—in metallic silver!

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Addams

(continued from page 52)

Chadwick. "We've met with Paul, and he's a very interesting guy. He has a presence that's really mesmerizing and I guess Concrete is *the* expression of himself."

According to Wilson, Chadwick is far more like the Ron Lithgow/Concrete character than the Larry Munro character. "I think Paul sees himself within Concrete, and I definitely think Paul would also say that. Paul considers *Concrete* his life's work. He's very protective of it, and the fact that he feels I could interpret it as both a writer and a director is just great. If all goes well, I'll direct it with Tim Burton producing."

The project is still in the early development stage. "But I can tell you that we do have a particular plot in mind," Wilson says, "and I want to use a *lot* of material that's already there in the comic book.

"There will be a compressed version of the origin story. He *will* be a guy whose brain is transferred by aliens into a huge rocklike body, and we'll hit many of those touchstones that I feel are the best things within the comic."

While Wilson is studying the comics scene, Thompson is working on the script for her own directorial debut—an adaptation of the Chinese ghost story *Rouge*, now retitled *Till We Meet Again*, for Fox.

"It's much more romantic than anything I've done yet," Thompson observes. "It's about a pair of lovers in Hollywood in the '20s. He's rich and she's a hooker. They can't be together, so they then commit double suicide. We pick up the story with her coming back, looking for him to reunite. The gig is that they can only come back once a year on the anniversary of their death." Winona Ryder and Johnny Depp, a real-life couple and co-stars of *Edward Scissorhands*, will star.

In the meantime, Thompson's adaptation of the Victorian children's novel *The Secret Garden* (previously filmed by MGM in 1949 and presently a Broadway musical), will lense in England this February with Carroll (*The Black Stallion*) Ballard directing and Francis Ford Coppola producing. Her Disney project *The Geek*—Martin Short grows up thinking he's a chicken—also has Wilson involved.

Thompson (who discussed her work in STARLOG #162) has also scripted Tim Burton's animated feature *Nightmare Before Christmas*, due out Christmas 1993. Of the far-off release date, she explains, "The models won't be ready until late spring.

All Mass Art. Copyright 1991 Viz Comics

***Mai, the Psychic Girl*, another film written by the duo, came about, because "Larry's really hooked into that world," explains Thompson.**

This isn't cartoon animation, but it's not claymation either. It's called *pixilation*. The story concerns Jack Skellington—the King of Halloween who has done it all with Halloween and so steals Christmas. The rest of the movie involves all the dire consequences thereof."

The one project whose future remains somewhat uncertain is the superhero epic they penned for Michael Jackson at Columbia Pictures, *Midknight*. Although intended for 1992 shooting, no director has been set yet. Oscar-winning production designer Anton (*Batman*) Furst (CS #7) will produce and design the sets.

Thompson describes it as, "Imagine that the Elephant Man gets to blow people away."

Wilson elaborates, "Actually, it's like a cross between *Batman* and *The Elephant Man*."

He describes the problems inherent in writing a crime-fighting superhero story for someone who's already viewed by many people as a real-life cartoon. "When we were told that Michael Jackson wanted to do a superhero film, we wondered what that *meant* and saw both the potential and the pitfalls. So, we went up and spent a day with Michael at his ranch and were very taken with him.

"We spent a long day talking about this. What we realized we could do was to begin with a character who was suffering a lot of inner and psychic pain. We gave that [concept] physical manifestations, and out of that, we were able to build a heroic character.

"Unfortunately, there's going to be so much baggage on this thing. There will be so many people waiting for it to fail on its ass or be something totally innocuous and *Peter Pan*-ish.

"Michael is very aware of the confines of his image, and he's willing to do something that breaks through that. I think it's going to surprise the hell out of people when they see it. I have high hopes for *Midknight*."

Tim Burton's name keeps popping up in regard to their projects. Both Thompson and Wilson speak of him in glowing terms.

Wilson sums up their admiration when discussing *Beetlejuice*. (*Beetlejuice II* is currently being written by Wilson's collaborator on the first film, Michael McDowell.) "I don't know if any of the other *Beetlejuice* writers, the late Warren Skarren and Michael McDowell, have ever said it, but *I'll* say it—Michael Keaton's performance was 90 percent improvised.

"McDowell and I had called the character outline of Beetlejuice 'Groucho Marx from Hell,' but in terms of the dialogue and riffs on the character, that's *all* Michael Keaton. The same with the waiting room—Death as the ultimate unemployment office. That was McDowell, but the characters in it were all Tim Burton.

"The point is, it all worked! What I say about the script is that Warren, Michael and myself built the launching pad, but Tim took the rocket to the Moon and just went places with it that were far more than we had ever imagined. *Beetlejuice* was one of those happy improvisations and extensions all meshed with the script. I loved it.

"I've become delighted with all the *Beetlejuice* toys and cartoons [CS #10]. This thing, that I had a hand in creating, has—in its own fashion—become a kind of pop icon, and that has been really fun.

"When we set out to write it, Michael and I said that if we could write a warm film where people ripped their faces off, we would be happy."

The writing team seems to be the first choice whenever an offbeat project is optioned. Yet, Caroline Thompson has no doubts about whether a supposedly limited-appeal project like *Concrete* can attract a mass audience. "On an emotional basis, *Concrete* is similar to how *Edward Scissorhands* found an audience. It's the same thing—it will appeal to people who find that their emotions are also buried in concrete."

Larry Wilson sums it all up: "These projects really choose us. Caroline and I were both blessed, or cursed, with these sensibilities. Finally, the stuff has moved far enough into the mainstream that we're able to make a living from it—which is lovely." CS

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Bodé

(continued from page 20)

Steve Barron's Limelight Productions and Eastman on a $7 million budget. The script will be written by Larry Todd. Regarding the method of animation, Bodé reveals with a hint of mystery that plans are to employ a "new technique."

While Ralph Bakshi's *Wizards* certainly displayed a strong Vaughn Bodé influence, *Cobalt 60* would be the first film based directly on the late artist's diverse canon, although at the time of his death, the William Morris Agency was prepared to fund two Bodé movies: A *Deadbone* feature and a live film of one of the famed Bodé cartoon concerts. "My father was going to be live on stage reading the voices for his characters, and then when you see the first frame or slide, suddenly, it would break into animation with my father's voice-over."

Bodé vows, however, that the strange tale of *Cobalt 60* won't be completed on celluloid. He and Todd still have plenty of tales to put to paper. "Definitely," he nods, "*Cobalt* will continue. At the end of [Book] Four, he's back in the desert and has his great grasser back, which was supposedly killed in battle in the second book. But Franklin Gothic Green, being Cobalt's friend and also very handy with knives, sews the grasser up and nurses him back to health."

As for future plot developments, Bodé points toward the enigma of how Cobalt and his son will cope with each other, something he says he's discussed at length with Todd.

"Larry and I were talking about how Cobalt's son could grow up and be the only one to defy Cobalt. So, maybe Cobalt might get killed sometime. We're not sure. In later books, though, Cobalt will meet his son several times without even knowing it. But, he'll find his son just as tough as he is. His son will be named after a stable isotope, by the way. Probably Cadmium 190 or something."

While notions of returning to the *Cobalt 60* universe and other lush realms of both his father's and his own dance through his head, Bodé will be touring the country with his own versions of Vaughn's cartoon concert. Fans can catch either the R-rated show, which features Vaughn Bodé's work from *Penthouse* and *Cavalier* magazines, or readings from Mark Bodé's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* books with fellow *TMNT* artist/letterer Steve Lavigne. Mark Bodé feels the most accurate description of what the next few years will hold is the same phrase with which he closes each show: "Stay tuned; the best is yet to come."

Continuum

(continued from page 24)

Shakespearean love story. The woman Talon has loved for hundreds of years is over in the *next* zone, and her zone is pulling away from Zone 27. You see, Zone 27 used to be much larger, and at that time Talon and the woman could be together. But Zone 27 sub-divided, with the woman in one zone and Talon in the other. These two lovers can no longer be together, so they're always trying to find a way to pierce the boundary. It's sad, and good drama."

For his part, Zick hopes *Zone Continuum* will be popular because "it's original. I want to do something that's visually and narratively exciting—different than what you normally see—yet something that is well-thought out and complex. I want to do something entertaining, too."

The reader "lives" the adventures through a normal human character named Manx, who also introduces Talon and the world of the Partners. Readers see these beings through his eyes. "Manx is a street kid, and he goes up to the top of a tall building with the intent of committing suicide," says Zick. "We don't know his reasons till later. But he manages to save Talon from a trap that Spear had set. After that, Manx is introduced to the Partners' world. In terms of the narrative, different charactors will supply first-person commentary, but the main character will be Talon."

While discussing his influences, Zick also addresses his concept of his target audience. "I'm still affected," he admits, "by what I read in the '60s. I'm 40, and back when I was a kid, comic material was very cross-over. It was very much for kids *and* adults. A lot of material today alienates one group or the other.

"Some material today is condescending to kids, or is too juvenile for adults. I feel the younger audience really enjoys sophisticated ideas and complicated concepts. There may be words or ideas they may not understand, but they can get into it, and maybe go to another source to find out. So, *Zone Continuum* is a cross-over series."

If the mini-series does well, there may be another mini-series, or maybe a regular title. It all depends, of course, on the public. For his part, Zick seems to think that Talon and the Partners have a future. At least, that's how it's being planned. "Yeah," Bruce Zick laughs, "we're going with the idea that this mini-series is only an introduction."

Like a Partner who's just stepped into an elevator, Bruce Zick plans on riding this one all the way to the top.

Paranoia

(continued from page 56)

"It's hard for scenes or little shticks not to creep into your own work when you read others' stuff a lot. It's odd—when I was going to high school, I read lots of comics and skipped the classwork they gave me, but when I started writing comics, I began reading the classics and filled in the holes in my education.

"I don't read the fan press and don't hit conventions," he adds. "I don't disparage it, not at all, but it's just *not* my interest. Now, it can be important to keep track of what's happening within your own industry, and in that I've probably been a little negligent, but Eternity handles that side of my work."

O'Connor says Eternity editor Chris Ulm came to him with the *Paranoia* idea partly because O'Connor has a substantial background in game design. Gamers may recognize his first publication: *Grimtooth's Traps.*

"*Grimtooth's*, for Flying Buffalo Games, was my first," he recalls. "I was 17 when I did that. It was my first job after leaving home. I did book reviews and in-house stuff for them for a while, then moved back to LA in '82 or '83 and did some computer-game design. I'm still freelancing. My last role-playing release was *Traps Ate* (the eighth *Grimtooth's* collection) for Task Force and my last computer game was *Dragon Wars* for Interplay two years ago."

In the comics field, O'Connor has been an Eternity writer for several years, scripting the adventures of the *Ex-Mutants* and their *New Humans* spin-off, a year's worth of *Lensman* adventures, the fantasy series *Badaxe* and *Dudley*. O'Connor previously discussed his projects in CS #9.

"I've been happy with my work, overall, but it hasn't sold as well as I would like," he admits. "I really believe my career in comics is tied to Eternity."

He is confident that gamers and *Paranoia* fans will enjoy this mini-series, even though it diverges from what they might expect.

"They'll probably ask themselves, 'This is *Paranoia*?' but [the books] will pump some new life into what may be a tired genre," he states. "If anything, hopefully, the series will inspire gamers to go back to *Paranoia* again and play it with a different take on things.

"The series will have enough of the *Paranoia* universe so that players can visualize their game in this new format," says Paul O'Connor. "It's an opportunity for fans to say, 'Gee, I hadn't thought of that.' "

Once again, the Ray is the brightest hero under the comics sun.

LIGHT YEARS

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

Brilliant. Simply brilliant. The brightest hero in comics is coming back to dazzle readers in the '90s. But *The Ray* is no flash in the pan. Around since the early '40s, he's now ready to pass the torch to his successor.

DC's revival of *The Ray* honors the original character published by Quality Comics, while re-creating him for today's readers in a new six-issue mini-series.

Veteran writer Jack C. Harris is returning to comics, working with artist Joe Quesada, a relative newcomer, and editor Jim Owsley to create a Ray that harkens back to Peter Parker and the beginnings of the Silver Age.

"Most of the Silver Age heroes were accidental heroes, either by atomic accidents over at Marvel, or some chemical accident at DC," Harris laughs, "and all of them were thrust into it. Most accepted it outright, but Peter Parker was reluctant—he wanted to be an entertainer at first, and stumbled into it because of a tragedy.

"I wanted to do something along those lines. This character was born with his powers, but didn't discover them until his late teens. Everyone around him says, 'Now you can be a hero,' but he says, 'I don't want to be a hero!' But everything tells him that that's what he must do!

"He's reluctant about the whole thing. Every step of the way is a double-edged sword of discovery for him. In that everything he finds out proves that something he discovered before was untrue! He gets very upset. He doesn't know who's telling him the truth—and he won't find out until the final issue."

Criminals won't have a Ray of hope with DC's latest revised superhero.

For 18-year-old Ray Terrill, the mystery begins with the first issue. "He has been told since birth that he's fatally allergic to sunlight, and has lived in a house with painted-over windows, existing on a nocturnal schedule. He has two nuns for private tutors and lives with his father in a townhouse in Philadelphia. He's pretty well-adjusted—his closest friend while growing up was his next-door neighbor, Jennifer Jurden, until something strange happened on his eighth birthday, though he can't remember what," says Harris.

Not long after high school, Ray meets his distant cousin Hank at his father's funeral. Hank knows the family's history. On his deathbed, Ray's father gave him a scrapbook filled with clippings about the original Ray, Terrill's actual father. After the Freedom Fighters, the original Ray, Happy Terrill, gave up his superhero career to live a normal life, but his son was born crackling with energy that Happy absorbed. That's why Ray Terrill is raised in the dark.

"So, our story opens with Ray witnessing his first sunrise, and charging up with energy," says Harris. "It's the first time he believes this whole story. He doesn't know how to handle this extra power. Hank tells him to be a superhero. Ray doesn't want to do that, and wants to talk to Jennifer.

"When Jennifer is taken hostage during a bank robbery, Ray gets so angry that he charges up in the street and lands in front of the getaway van, which melts. The crooks scatter, Ray is crackling with energy; when Jennifer reaches for him, her husband stops her, and Ray passes out.

"He's sitting alone in his motel later, and hears someone call his name. He thinks it's

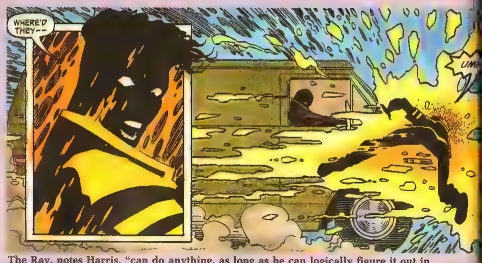
his cousin Hank, but he looks in the bathroom, and standing there is the *original* Ray, saying, 'Help me—you're the only one who can save my life.' That's the end of the first issue!"

Another mystery in *The Ray* involves an enigmatic inmate of Arkham Asylum called Caldwell the Candle Man. "He's in a stone cell, yet seems to be able to observe everything that's going on," says Harris.

The writer says he began reading comics around the time that legendary editor Julius Schwartz revived *The Flash* in *Showcase*, and every superhero he enjoyed as a kid was an updated older character. "I was very intrigued by the whole revival concept," Harris observes, "and I think in every case, the revivals *improved* on the originals; the new Flashes and Green Lanterns were improvements on the old, and that was also true at Marvel. That might not be the case nowadays, but I still wanted to revive an old character."

The Ray was already on DC's list of unclaimed characters. Harris had edited *Freedom Fighters*—DC's short-lived revival of Uncle Sam, the Black Condor, Phantom Lady, Doll Man, the Ray and other heroes from the Quality line of comics in the '40s. "I was always intrigued with the Ray. At one point back then, we were going to spin him off into his own back-up feature in *Black Lightning*.

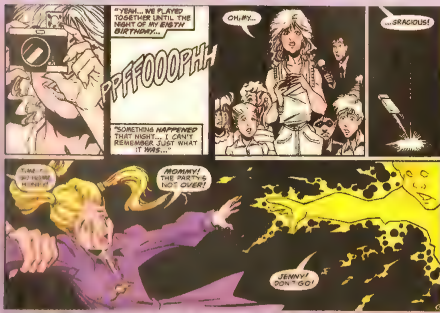
"I used to like the costume, although the new Ray is completely redesigned—in fact, we make fun of the old costume. At one point, the original Ray wants to give him a costume, but the young Ray doesn't *want* a costume, and if he *does* have a costume, he *certainly* doesn't want it looking like the one this guy's wearing, because he doesn't like it!"



The Ray, notes Harris, "can do anything, as long as he can logically figure it out in his mind." Hope he's thinking of a stretcher right now.

Photo: Courtesy Jack C. Harris

"I was always intrigued with the Ray," says writer Jack C. Harris.


"YEAH... WE PLAYED TOGETHER UNTIL THE NIGHT OF MY EIGHTH BIRTHDAY...
PFFOOOPHH
"SOMETHING HAPPENED THAT NIGHT... I CAN'T REMEMBER... JUST WHAT IT WAS..."
OH, RAY--
...GRACIOUS!
MOMMY! THE PARTY'S NOT OVER!
JENNY! DON'T GO!

Young Ray Terrell's birthday party is highlighted by his reaction to a camera flash.

The Ray is firmly entrenched in the DC Universe with the inclusion of Arkham Asylum and a major DC villain in the book.

"We wanted to introduce a supervillain to battle the Ray, but I wanted it to be an established DC villain, so the Ray would be locked into the DC Universe right away," Harris explains. "It's a major Green Lantern villain that everyone knows and hates, and he fits in with the strip's whole feeling."

The villains may fit in, but Harris says the Ray is still a reluctant hero.

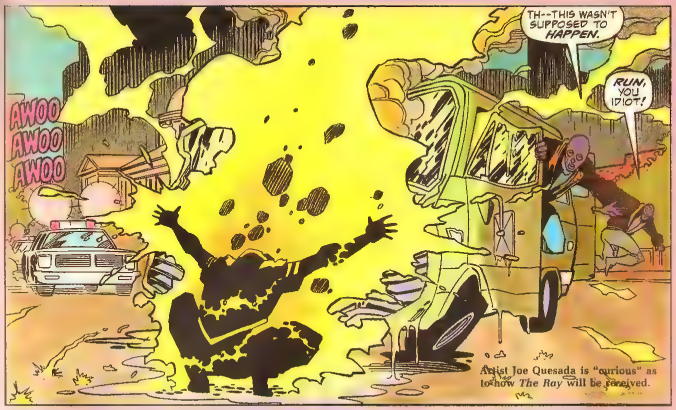
"Every secret revealed proves a previous secret is untrue. The whole thing dates to a conspiracy stretching all the way back to the original Ray's origin. It all has a purpose, which is what young Ray has to face at the series' end," he says.

This time, the Ray's powers will be more defined. "The old Ray could do just about *anything*!" Harris exclaims. "If he needed a power, he had it! I've refined them here.

"Basically, he has the power of mind over matter, and he's his own battery. He can do anything, as long as he can logically figure it out in his mind. That's *not* as easy as it seems. If he wanted to create a gun, he could, but only if he knew the gun's complete inner workings in the first place—otherwise, it *wouldn't* work.

"He can shoot out energy, fly, pass through objects, and move at the speed of light—but he finds that difficult. If he chases after a crook at the speed of light, he'll wind up around the world! As long as he can receive sunlight, he can charge up, and if he absorbs enough, he can go through the night. Certain things resist his power, like the color black or darkness. It's harder for him to do battle in the dark."

The Ray marks Harris' first DC comics series in a long time. During recent years, he has worked with 3-D comics expert Ray Zone on projects



Artist Joe Quesada is "curious" as to how *The Ray* will be received.

with Steve Ditko and Kurt Schaffenberger, and has done children's books for Western Publishing and Parachute Press.

For *The Ray*, Harris is collaborating with Joe Quesada, and he says the young artist makes it easier to write about the 18-year-old Ray.

"I'm really grateful for his input—the way Ray dresses and his hair, as well as all the things on his bedroom wall. Joe adds things like that to the strip. It inspires me, too. For instance," says Harris, "in the second issue, I noticed that he drew Ray left-handed, and I thought, 'This is interesting, I'll have to play around with that.' The artwork I've been getting is just astonishing. I've been really knocked over by what Joe can do."

Quesada says he's enjoying his work with Harris as well; they collaborate by telephone, with Quesada working from the plots that Harris sends him. "Jack is great—he's really loose and easy-going, so it has been a lot of fun."

Quesada became involved with *The Ray* through his work with editor Owsley. Although Quesada is relatively new to comics—his previous work for DC included two stories in *The Question Quarterly* as well as *Spelljammer*—he jumped at the opportunity when Owsley offered him the miniseries.

"I remembered it slightly, but I wasn't all that familiar with the character," says Quesada. "But I trotted into the DC library to pick up some back issues of *Freedom Fighters*, because the old Lou Fine stuff that I really wanted was in terrible shape, just ripping in my hands."

Quesada's enthusiasm for *The Ray* grew when Owsley described his plans for the title.

"Essentially, what Jim wanted to do with the character was really fun! I remembered the Peter Parker/Spider-Man genre from when I was a kid, and

WHO... WHO ARE YOU--?!
I AM WHO YOU MUST BECOME! I'M CALLED... THE RAY--
--AND YOU ALONE MAY SAVE MY LIFE!!
NEXT:
RAY VS. RAY
AND OUR GUY LOSES! (HEY, AT LEAST WE'RE HONEST! HA.)
DON'T DARE MISS
"THAT OLD HOUSE"
(OR, AT LEAST BORROW A COPY FROM YOUR FRIEND!)

All Ray Art: Joe Quesada/Art Nichols/Colors: Noelle Giddings

Ray's wishes to avoid heroics may change when he meets with the original hero.

Quesada hopes the Ray's powers "explode" off his darkly-drawn pages.

that appealed to me," Quesada says. "Also, I was relating to this stuff. I find a lot of myself in the Ray, many of the sight gags that get thrown in and even some dialogue!"

Quesada isn't trying to imitate the late Lou Fine's artistic style. "There ain't no way I could do anything that good!" laughs Quesada. "Lou Fine's stuff was just magnificent. My stuff is radically different anyway, so there's really no conscious effort on my part to try to emulate that—I *couldn't* if I tried! The style is pretty much me. I have a lot of pretty obvious influences, like Mike Mignola.

"Since my style is very graphic, dark and black, and this character's powers are basically the powers of light, what better way to express that than to try and make the book as dark as possible?" he asks. "That way, when he does use these powers, it'll hopefully explode off the page!"

The artist agrees with comparisons of the Ray to the original Peter Parker. "I personally think that Peter Parker is no longer someone to whom kids can relate. In my mind, Peter Parker is like Billy Joel—he's married to a famous model, and everybody wonders, 'How did he get there?' *The Ray* is a throw-back. In the first

(continued on page 66)

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Whether they're kids or adults, Ray and Jenny just can't keep in touch.

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Manowar

(continued from page 28)

books that I don't necessarily do the art on—I run production at Valiant—so I'm involved in every aspect from color separators to writers.

"I know what Jim considers acceptable, I know the kind of stories he wants to tell. He knows where my strengths lie, and we have a lot of non-verbal communication. He's terrific to work with—otherwise, I wouldn't be here!"

Layton says they've been able to establish a new comics company almost from scratch. "We did build on what Russ Manning did [for *Magnus*], although *Solar* does bear little resemblance to the original. We really did build everything from the ground up, and that's the way we wanted to do it. It seems to be real effective. We're doing well out there at a time when many other companies are going under. Jim and I went into this to compete directly with Marvel and DC, and that's why the accent right now is on doing the mainstream superhero stuff."

After 17 years in the comics industry, Layton says he's still having fun. "I'm having a great time! I'm finally in a position where I can do the kinds of things that I think are important. Part of my disillusionment with Marvel is that they're really 'story lite,' or in some cases, there's really no story at all—it's just episodic. I'm a storyteller.

"When I worked with David Michelinie all those years, I think we did some really great *Iron Man* stories. People to this day tell me the memorable stories are the alcohol stories, the Doom Camelot stories. To me, those are important stories in the histories of those characters, and that's what I like doing.

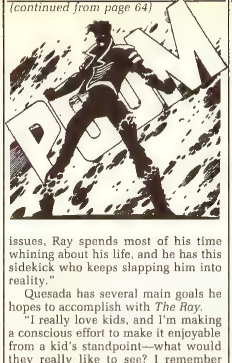
"There's something very important about creating comics that everyone can read, not just hardcore fans. I've given copies of *Solar* to total civilians. Not only were they able to read them, they became excited about them and wanted to read more. Our goal is to create a larger, mass market, and I really felt like there was no way I could do that at Marvel. Here, we've started to create that.

"The ultimate victory is not just to create stuff that a comic fan can get excited about, but to send copies home to my cousin who works in the mill, and have him get just as excited," says Bob Layton, who believes *X-O Manowar* should maintain that level of excitement.

"With all of our products, our goal is to create real quality work in story and in art—and I don't think we've disappointed anybody so far!"

Ray

(continued from page 64)



issues, Ray spends most of his time whining about his life, and he has this sidekick who keeps slapping him into reality."

Quesada has several main goals he hopes to accomplish with *The Ray*.

"I really love kids, and I'm making a conscious effort to make it enjoyable from a kid's standpoint—what would they really like to see? I remember some of the early *Spider-Man* stuff, but I don't say, 'This is the way it has gotta be done.' I'm just really trying to make it fun.

"Looking at comics today, I feel there's a genuine lack of good storytelling, and being able to look at a page and know what's going on at first glance. I also wanted to make the story as clear as possible and keep the pacing going, because I feel there's a general lack of concern with telling it properly among artists in the industry lately.

"I hope people like the book. This is going to be my first exposure in the mass market, and I'm curious to see how people are gonna receive my stuff, because nobody has ever seen it!" says Quesada, noting that he hopes *The Ray* will become an ongoing series. "If the ongoing title is written by Jack, edited by Jim, and is as much fun as it has been up to now, it would be great!"

Harris wants to see *The Ray* return in an unlimited series. "I would certainly like to carry on with it, and they're already talking about a regular series," says Harris. "Everyone directly above Owsley seems to be real hot on it. They keep talking about it, so hopefully, before I finish the sixth issue, they'll give me a go-ahead for a regular series!"

So, while Jack C. Harris, Joe Quesada, Jim Owsley and company wait for a green light on the further adventures of *The Ray*, readers can enjoy the current revival of comics' original dazzler.

And, all indications are that the future of *The Ray* looks very bright.

Blood

(continued from page 48)

the two stories are totally unrelated.

The book's mood is depicted vividly by the resident artist. The atmospheric land has inspired many tales of spirits and lore, mostly due to the nature's erratic climate. "It can be very magical at times. Sometimes you can be sitting in Scotland, and it can be pissing out rain and you're longing for the sun in California, but other times, you will come across parts in Scotland, particularly in the valley, where you can have sunshine," Kennedy says, pausing for the image to set in the mind's eye. "And then it suddenly becomes very dark, and I mean *dark*. And with a breeze blowing through the grass, or the wind blowing through the trees, it gets very atmospheric. Of course, if you happen to be looking at an old ruined castle in the distance, your imagination just runs off with you. The land has inspired so many stories—I can see why *Highlander* was written."

Sunsets on the Orkney Isles are equally inspiring. Kennedy recalls a time when writer Tom Veitch visited. "Tom was here three or four years ago. The sun, she was just dying—going away for the night. The horizon on the Atlantic Ocean was just perfect, and Tom turned to me and said, 'I can just imagine Viking ships coming round the headland!' " Kennedy's currently working with Veitch on a *Star Wars* mini-series from Dark Horse Comics, and the two collaborated on *The Light and Darkness War* for Epic.

Blood on the Moors and *Star Wars* don't keep Kennedy busy enough. He's finishing some inking on two *Batman* stories by John Wagner and will be working on *The Airtight Garage* with Moebius. "It seems Marvel is pleased with *Blood on the Moors*, and they've basically said to pick a character again. I mentioned to them that I would like to do something with the X-Men or Wolverine. I hate saying it, but I would like to do one of those big sellers. With popular characters, though, more people get to see your work." He adds with a chuckle, "And I presume you get big royalties, which can't hurt."

Cam Kennedy will be visiting the States next summer when he attends the San Diego Comic Convention. "I'm looking forward to that. By then, I feel I'll have a good body of work together. The fans I've met in America have been refreshing. It's good to see people so interested in comics. As long as they're interested in comics, they won't be doing anything nasty—at least, they shouldn't be, right?"

Batman's Reel Facts

With the next adventure in the Batman cinematic saga now in production, the rumors haven't ended. Various magazine, newspaper and TV stories have reported wildly erratic "facts," ranging yet again from the truly bizarre to the incredibly batty.

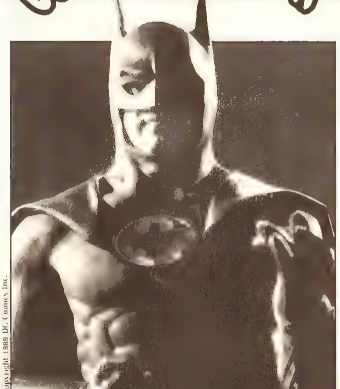
Here's the *real* information, rather mundane compared to the erroneous speculation published elsewhere. It's all detailed, all confirmed, and all, as far as COMICS SCENE can tell, true:

❑ The follow-up adventure is titled *Batman Returns* (not *Batman II* or anything else). It'll be released by Warner Bros. in summer 1992.

❑ Tim Burton is again directing (CS#8, STARLOG #130 & #162). Burton's *Edward Scissorhands* collaborator, Denise Di Novi, is the producer.

❑ Michael Uslan and Benjamin Melniker, who purchased movie rights to the *Batman* mythos from DC Comics in the early 1980s and served as *Batman*'s executive producers, are also on board again. The first film's producers, Peter Guber and Jon Peters, although now long gone from the Warner Bros. studio stable, are also listed as executive producers for contractual reasons. Guber and Peters are not directly involved with this movie.

❑ The script is by Dan (*Heathers*) Waters. Later drafts have been written by Wesley (*Arachnophabia*) Strick. Final writing credits will probably not be determined for several months. An earlier script by Sam Hamm, the first film's co-writer, was discarded.



Batman Photo Trademark & Copyright 1989 DC Comics, Inc.

The darknight detective looks to next summer. Here are the "reel facts."

❑ Key creative personnel encoring from the first film include composer Danny Elfman (STARLOG #147) and costume designer Bob Ringwood (STARLOG #143), joined for this movie by costuming colleague Mary (*Short Circuit*) Vogt.

❑ New to the world of *Batman* are director of photography Stefan Czapsky (who worked with Burton on *Edward Scissorhands*), production designer Bo Welch (who teamed with Burton on both *Beetlejuice* and *Edward Scissorhands*), film editor Chris (*Top Gun*) Lebenzon and second unit director Bill (*Midnight Run*) Weber.

❑ After creating *Edward Scissorhands*, special makeup FX designer Stan Winston joins Burton's *Batman* team. He's creating the Penguin's look.

❑ Bob Kane, who created Batman in 1939, again serves as a consultant.

❑ Michael Keaton returns, of course, as Batman.

❑ Also back from the first film's cast are Michael Gough as Alfred and Pat Hingle as Commissioner James Gordon.

❑ Kim Basinger, Robert Wuhl, Billy Dee Williams and Jack Nicholson aren't in the cast. It is possible, though unlikely, that they might appear via the miracle of flashback footage. Other reports about their participation are in error.

❑ *Taxi*'s Danny DeVito portrays the Penguin.

❑ Michelle (*Ladyhawke*) Pfeiffer (STARLOG#94) is the Catwoman. Annette (*Regarding Henry*) Bening was originally cast in the role, but had to bow out prior to filming due to pregnancy.

❑ Other cast members include Christopher (*The Dead Zone*) Walken (STARLOG #97) as businessman Max Schreck, Michael (*Shocker*) Murphy as Gotham City's new mayor and Vincent (*Ghost*) Schiavelli as the Organ Grinder.

❑ Paul Reubens—who worked with Burton on the director's first feature, *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*—plays the Penguin's father.

❑ At this time, the character of Robin has *not* been included in the film. Reports elsewhere to the contrary are inaccurate.

❑ *Batman Returns* is filming in California, not England (where the first movie is lensed) or Mexico (the Churubusco Studios, where *Total Recall* was shot, were considered). Soundstages at Warners Studios as well as at least one vast stage at Universal (for the Batcave) are being used.

❑ Merchandising and licensing tie-in deals are still being finalized. Repeating first film tie-ins, however, include a novelization (apparently from Warner Books), a Batman/Penguin original tales anthology (from Bantam) and trading cards (from Topps).

❑ Various DC Comics tie-ins to *Batman Returns* are also expected.

❑ An animated *Batman* series is in the works from Warner Bros. TV. It premieres in fall 1992 on Fox.

—*David McDonnell*

COMICS screen

All projects are live-action unless specified. Those marked by an asterisk (*) are new/updated since last listing. **Not everything listed will ultimately ever be made.** Legend: S: script; D: director; P: producer; AN: animated; LA: live-action; Syn: syndicated; HB: Hanna-Barbera; MWS: Murakami Wolf Swenson; RB: Rankin-Bass; WD: Disney; WB: Warner Bros.; PP: Paramount; U: Universal; Col: Columbia; FF: Funnybook Films. **Attn. all pros:** Info to be added to this list is cheerfully invited. Send to COMICS SCENE, 475 Park Ave. South, 8th Flr., NY, NY 10016. (Info as of 10/28/91)

* **The Addams Family.** Film. Out. (see article) AN series. ABC. HB. Fall '92.

The Airtight Garage. AN. S: Randy Lofficier.

Aladdin. AN film. WD. '92.

Alias. Film. U. S: David S. Goyer. P: P. Lenkov. S: Daniel.

Alley Oop. Film. Col.

The American. Film. P: Joel Silver. S: Mark Vorhieden.

American Flagg! Film.

An American Tail: Fievel Goes West. AN film. Out

Ant-Man. Film.

Archie. LA Film. S: N. & D. Ephron. D: J. Schumacher. DIC.

Baby Huey. AN short. U. S: Bill Kopp.

Barbarella. TV. Nelvana.

Barbie. Film. Abrams/Gentile Ent. & Mattel.

* **Batman.** Sequel. *Batman Returns.* S: Dan Waters. D: Tim Burton. WB. June '92. AN series, '92 Fox. (see item).

Battletoads. TV pilot.

* **Beauty & the Beast.** AN film. WD. Out. (see articles).

* **Bebe's Kids.** AN film. S. Reginald Hudlin. Hyperion/PP.

Beetle Bailey. Film.

Beetlejuice. AN series. ABC. video & FBC. Film sequel.

Betty Boop. Film. D: R. Fleischer

Blackhawk. Film Amblin S: Dan Aykroyd

Blackman. Film.

Blade. Film. S: Lee Goldberg & William Rabkin

Blinky Bill. Australian AN film. P: Yoram Gross. '92.

Blondie. Film musical. WD. S: Alfred Uhry. P: Francine LeFrak. Dean Young.

* **Bloom County.** AN TV Special. S: Berke Breathed Ambling/ CBS

James Bond. Syn AN series. *James Bond Jr.* MWS

Bonkers D. Bobcat. Syn AN series WD

Boogiemanland. AN. Nelvana. Fox.

Bucky O'Hare. Syn AN.

* **Bugs Bunny.** *Bugs Bunny Lunar Tunes.* TV special. Theatrical shorts "Blooper Bunny." "Rock-a-bye Rabbit." *Termite Terrace.* LA/AN film. D: Joe Dante. Based on Chuck Jones' *Chuck Amuck.*

Bullwinkle. *Boris & Natasha* film. Release delayed.

Capitol Critters. AN series. P: S. Bochco/HB. ABC. '92.

Captain America. Film

Captain Planet. AN series.

Casper. Film. Amblin.

Cool World. AN/LA film. PP. D: Ralph Bakshi. '92.

The Crow. Film. S: John Shirley. D: Alex Proyas. P: Ed Pressman.

Danger Squad. Film. P/D: Leo Fong. W/D: P.R. Cable.

Darkwing Duck. AN Syn & ABC series.

Deathlok. Film.

Defenders of Dynatron City. AN half-hour. LucasArts.

* **Dennis the Menace.** Film. P. John Hughes. WB. Also *Dennis the Musical.* Broadway musical. Fall '92?

Scooby-Doo Art: Copyright 1991 Hanna-Barbera Entertainment

Scooby-Dooby-Doo, where are you? Perhaps on your way to the movie screen?

Charlie Chan. Film. S/D: David Mamet. P: G. Kirkwood, J. Hyde.

Chester Cheetah. AN. Nelvana. Fox.

Chicken Man. AN spoof series. Calico.

City of Darkness. Film. S: Patrick Cirillo & Joe Gayton. P: M. Douglas, R. Bieber. Col.

* **Cobalt 60.** AN Film. (see article)

Conan. Film sequel. S: Charles Edward Pogue.

* **Concrete.** Film. S: (D) L. Wilson, C. Thompson. P: Tim Burton. (see article).

Dinosaurs for Hire. Film. S: Richard Finney & James Bonny. Fox. FX: Henson C Shop.

Dr. Strange. Film. Zoetrope. D: Alex Cox. P: F. Coppola.

* **Drawn Together.** TV sitcom pilot. Cartoonist's character comes to life. S: Kelly Kulchak.

Dreamwalker. CBS TV film.

Dudley Do-Right. Film. PP.

Elfquest. Film/TV. Abby Lou Prod. Freedom Distrib.

Evangeline. Film. FF.

Family Dog. AN series. CBS. P: Spielberg, Burton, Klein. '92. Amblin/Nelvana.

Far Side. AN TV.

Fearless Fosdick. LA Nelvana.

Fish Police. AN series. HB. CBS. Mid-season. S: J. Romano.

The Flintstones. Film. Fred: John Goodman. D: Richard Donner. U/Amblin. AN TV film. S: J. Romano.

Garfield. AN series.

G.I. Joe. Film. S: Anthony & John Gentile WB.

Goofy. Syn AN series *Goof Troop.* WD.

The Green Arrow. TV.

The Green Hornet. Film. S: D. Mancini. P: D. Kirschner. U.

Grimjack. Film.

Gumby. Film.

Hopalong Cassidy. Film. S: G. Popper, J. Rosenthal. Alligator Prods.

Human Target. Series. ABC. Cast: R. Springfield, C. Clemons. P: D. Bilson, P. De Meo, L. Lyttle. '92.

Inspector Gadget. LA TV series. DIC. Family Channel.

Iron Man. Film. D: Stuart Gordon. U.

The Jetsons. LA film. U.

Jo Jo. Film. P: Lee Caplin. S: Mike Chapman.

Jonny Quest. Film. U.

Judge Dredd. Film. Fox. S: H. Chaykin & J. Moore. P: C. Lippincott. For '93.

Kaanga. Film. S: (D) Geoff Edwards, S. Bernard. P: L. Caplin. B. Edwards, T. Adams.

Li'l Abner. TV. P: Max & Micheline Keller.

Little Mermaid. AN prequel TV series. For '92. WD.

Little Nemo. AN film. TMS Ent./Hemdale. June '92 release.

Lone Wolf & Cub. Film. D: John Bruno. P: Ed Pressman. S: Bill Wisher.

Lucky Luke. TV series Terence Hill. SB Comm.

* **Mai the Psychic Girl.** Film. D: Tim Burton. S: L. Wilson, C. Thompson. P: Burton, Wilson, Denise Di Novi, Walter Hill. Carolco. (see article)

Mandrake. Film.

The Mask. Film. New Line.

Mr. A. Video.

Mr. Magoo. Film. P: S. Tisch. AN/LA.

Mr. X. Film. P: Jim Cash & Jack Epps Jr.

Monster in My Pocket. AN special. HB. ABC. S: Glenn Leopold.

Mother Goose & Grimm. AN series. CBS.

Nancy. Film. P: P. Muller.

Negative Man. Bob Kane hero. LA series. Nelvana.

Neil the Horse. AN/LA.

Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD. Film. S: Greg Pruss.

Joe Palooka. Musical.

Paparazzi Samurai. AN TV series. P. DIC. Abrams/Gentile.

* **Peanuts.** New AN TV Special. Film.

The Phantom. Film. P: B. Sherlock, P. Sjoquist, J. Torv, R. Price. S. Ken Shadie. Lee Falk, con. D: Simon Wincer.

Pico & **Columbus.** AN film. Bavaria Film.

Pirates of Dark Water. AN series. ABC. HB.

Power Pack. TV pilot. S: J. Brett. N World/Paragon.

Plastic Man. Film. WB/Amblin.

* **Prince Valiant.** AN series. Family Channel. LA Film. Constantin Films. S: Michael Beckner. P: Jim Gorman, Bernd Eichinger.

The Prowler. Film. FF.

The Punisher. Sequel.

Radio Boy. AN. RB.

Reid Fleming. Film. S: creator David Boswell. P: M. Weisman, J. Loeb II.

Richie Rich. Film. P: J. Silver. J. Davis. S: Neil Tolkin.

RoboCop 3. S: Frank Miller & Fred Dekker (D). For '92.

Roger Rabbit. Prequel film. *Who Discovered Roger Rabbit.* D: Rob Minkoff. WD. New short "Hare in My Soup."

Rogue Trooper. Film.

The Saint. Film. S: Terry Hayes. D: Renny Harlin. P: Robert Evans. PP.

Scooby Doo. Film. WB.

Secret Agent X-9. AN film.

Sgt. Preston. TV revival.

Sgt. Rock. Film. P: Joel Silver, Bob Zemeckis. WB.

The Shadow. Film. S: David Koepp. P: Martin Bregman. U.

The She-Hulk. Film. S/D: Larry Cohen. B. Nielsen.

The Silver Surfer. Film.

The Simpsons. AN. FBC.

* **Speed Racer.** Film. S: (D) Patrick Johnson. John Lau. P: J. Silver. Richard Donner. WB.

* **Spider-Man.** Film. D: Jim Cameron. Carolco. Stage musical. S & lyrics: B. Herman. Music: K. Herrmann. EXP: Stan Lee. D: J. Nash. J. Calamari.

Starwatcher. AN film. P: Alain Guiot/Videosystem. S: Moebius (D) & J. Fryzman.

Sub-Mariner. Film.

Superboy. Syn TV.

Super-Dave. AN version of LA series. DIC.

Superman. *Superman: The New Movie.* S: Mark Jones & Cary Bates. To lense FL.

Super Mario Bros. LA film. S: Barry Morrow. D. DeVito.

Swamp Thing. TV. USA.

Tales from the Crypt. HBO.

Tarzan. Syn TV series.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. AN series. CBS & Syn.

Terry & the Pirates. Film. S: J. Feiffer. P: G. Kirkwood. J. Hyde. EXP: S. Weston.

Thor. Film. Stonebridge.

Time Beavers. AN TV series. Kushner-Locke.

Tintin. AN series. Nelvana. Ellipse. HBO.

Tom & Jerry. AN film. P/D: Phil Roman. Summer '92.

Trouble with Girls. Film. Fox/FF. S: W. Jacobs. G. Jones. P: M. Pepler. N. Tabachnick.

Lolsa DC and Marvel folks meet in *Crossover Classics: The DC-Marvel Collection*, assembling the two companies' past team-up collaborations in one volume.

Ultraman. 13 new half-hour TV episodes. Shot in English.

Valentina. TV series. Domenica Hampton. Retoitalia.

Vampirella. Film. S/D: Jim Wynorski.

V for Vendetta. Film. WB. S: Hilary Henkin.

WARP. Film. S/P: Mark Victor & Michael Grais.

Watchmen. Film. P: J. Silver. D: T. Gilliam.

We're Back. AN film. Amblin London/U.

Why I Hate Saturn. TV.

* **Wild Cards.** Film. Disney.

S: George R.R. Martin. P: Michael Engelberg.

Wizard of Id. Film. Cinergi.

Wolverine. Film.

The X-Men. Film. Carolco. P: Jim Cameron. AN 5-up mini-series. FBC. Marvel P.

Yogi Bear. *Yo! Yogi.* AN TV series. HB. NBC.

Zorn. Film. AN series.

Zorro. Film. D: Steven Spielberg. S: Nancy Larson. Tri-Star. TV series. Family Chan.

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1. Callers with rotary or touchtone phones may access the service by dialing 1-900-7-SELENA (1-900-773-5362), anywhere in the continental U.S. at any time, 24 hours a day. The charge of each call is $1.95 for the first minute and 75¢ for each additional minute. 2. Only callers with touchtone telephones may enter the monthly sweepstakes drawing using their telephones. 3. Callers may call and enter the drawing as many times as they like, however only one entry per call is permitted. 4. Drawings will be held on the last day of each month beginning on December 31, 1991 and will continue until the drawing is suspended. One (1) first prize winner, three (3) second prize winners and twenty (20) third prize winners will be selected randomly each month. All winners will be notified by telephone. 5. No minimum age required. Anyone who is under 18 years of age must get parental permission before calling. All prizes won by persons under 18 years of age shall be awarded in the name of a parent or legal guardian. 6. Sponsors and their service provider are not responsible or liable for incorrect or inaccurate entry of information by callers, technical malfunctions of the telephone network, computer equipment, software or any combination thereof, or lost or delayed data transmissions. 7. Drawing open to all U.S. continental residents. Employees and families of West Interactive Inc. and Gramercy Enterprises Inc. and their affiliated companies and sponsors are not eligible. All federal, state, and local laws and regulations apply. Telephone entry of sweepstakes void in MD, AZ, VA, GA, MI and LA. 8. The prizes will be awarded. The odds of winning depend upon the number of entries received. No prize substitution or transfer is permitted. All taxes are sole responsibility of winner. 9. No purchase necessary to enter sweepstakes. For free entry, send a self-addressed stamped envelope with your name, address, telephone number and age to the sponsor at: Selena's Comics Hotline, c/o Gramercy Enterprises Inc., 114 East 14th Street, Suite 276, New York, NY, 10003. Residents of VT and WA state need not include return postage. All written entries must be received seven (7) days prior to the monthly drawing date ("the deadline"). All written entries received after the deadline will be transferred to the next month's drawing. 10. Complete rules and/or list of prize winners may be obtained by writing to the sponsor at: "Selena's Comics Hotline-Rules" c/o Gramercy Enterprises Inc., 114 East 14th Street, Suite 276, New York, NY 10003.

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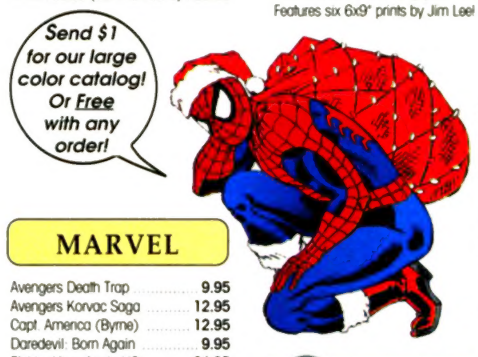

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